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LIVERPOOL FC

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Wishing you a Red Christmas & New Year from this tree-mendous LFC squad



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umbro
L.F.C



REMEMBERING RAY

This month's issue features Reds legend Terry McDermott, who celebrates his 70th birthday in December, [illegible] hailing him as "arguably the first great modern attacking midfielder".

A similar epithet could also be used to describe Ray Kennedy, who passed away on the day these last pages of the magazine went to press. Everyone at Liverpool FC was deeply saddened to hear the news, and we'll be paying tribute to Ray more comprehensively in Issue 113. Our thoughts are with Ray's family and friends, many of them from the great Reds side of the 70s.



RUMOURS THAT LIVERPOOL GOALIES ARE FIRED OUT OF CANNONS IN TRAINING CONTINUE TO GROW

CORNER TAKEN QUICKLY



Just like Barcelona in 2019, the page where you don't know what to expect...

5 CHRISTMAS REDS

Pepe REINaDEER
Matt McQUEEN'S SPEECH
SANTA Westerveld
Andy CAROL (singer)
Bruce Grobbelaar LA LA, FA LA LA

OUR LADS HAVE COME FROM ALL OVER THE PLACE

Divock Origi (Ostend, Belgium)

Ostend is a city on the eastern Belgian coast at the southern tip of the Northern Sea, a little west of Bruges – which encompasses a lot, but then Ostend means 'east end' in English.

With a population of around 71,000 it is Belgium's largest coastal city and has a long sandy beach, but also attracts around 600,000 visitors a year to the Winter in the Park festival. Ostend also has one of the biggest Christmas Markets in Europe, making it one of the few places where you could get sand in your ice-skates.

Although he grew up 200 miles away in a town called Houthalen-Oost on the outskirts of Genk, Divock was born in Ostend in 1995. It means he is from the same city as Motown legend Marvin Gaye – bet you didn't think he'd appear twice on this page this month.

Marie-Jose of Belgium – aka the 'Last Queen of Italy' – was also born in Ostend in 1906. She was only the Italian queen for 34 days in May 1946, about the same length of time as Kopites celebrated Big Div's Champions League final goal in May 2019.

Ostend has a horse-racing track called the Hippodrome Wellington, which has hosted gigs by David Bowie and Bon Jovi, and a Belgian art museum called Mu.ZEE.

It can only be a matter of time before a canvas featuring Divock Origi's scorpion-kick goal at Preston adorns the walls to display the art of goalscoring.

SHOCK MUSICAL REVELATION OF THE MONTH

"When I was 13, Marvin Gaye came to our house for dinner and I had a little game of football with him in the garden."
John Barnes

BLAGGING IT

One of these statements is true, the others are made up. Can you suss it out?

- **Billy Liddell signed for the Reds in 1938 after Liverpool gave his club Lochgelly Violet ten red shirts and a set of goal-nets.**
- **Albert Stubbins signed for the Reds from Newcastle in 1946 after tossing a coin to decide if he should talk to Liverpool or Everton first.**
- **Dave Hickson signed for the Reds from Everton in 1959 as he preferred Anfield's new floodlights to those at Goodison Park which made him squint.**

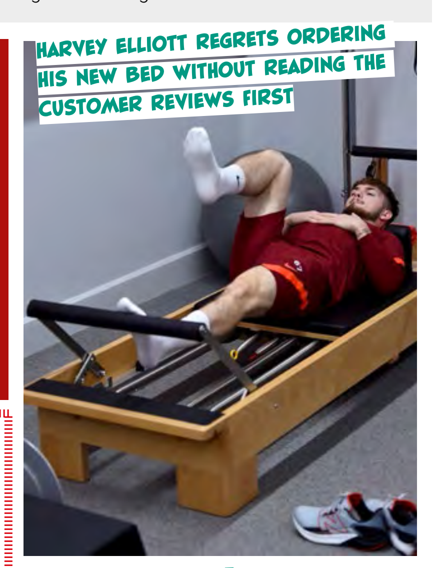
Answer: Albert Stubbins spoke to Liverpool first after tossing a coin to decide between the Merseyside rivals and was so impressed with what he heard he signed for LFC immediately. Billy Liddell cost £200 to sign and there was nothing up with Dave Hickson's eyes!

RANDOM OLD CHANT OF THE MONTH

"Oh he is a midfield maestro,
And his passing is so delightful,
Everyone wants to know,
Alonso, Alonso, Alonso!"

10 Post-War Christmas Day Matches

25/12/1946 Stoke City 2-1 Liverpool
25/12/1947 Liverpool 1-3 Arsenal
25/12/1948 Manchester United 0-0 Liverpool
25/12/1950 Blackpool 3-0 Liverpool
25/12/1951 Liverpool 1-1 Blackpool
25/12/1952 Burnley 2-0 Liverpool
25/12/1953 West Brom 5-2 Liverpool
25/12/1954 Liverpool 6-2 Ipswich Town
25/12/1956 Liverpool 1-0 Leyton Orient
25/12/1957 Grimsby 3-1 Liverpool



HARVEY ELLIOTT REGRETS ORDERING HIS NEW BED WITHOUT READING THE CUSTOMER REVIEWS FIRST



SHOCK FASHION REVELATION OF THE MONTH

"I gave my 1996 FA Cup final suit to Helen Chamberlain for her wedding to darts player James Wade. They called it off, but she's still got it."
Jason McAteer

“ANFIELD IS INCREDIBLE – YOU FEEL THE LOVE FROM THE FANS”

Ibrahima Konate on the path that took him from France to Germany and now England and one of the most legendary homes in world football

→


6



SOCHAUX-LEIPZIG-LIVERPOOL

"I wouldn't say that I could have predicted how my career has progressed from the start, but I always believed in my ability and my work.

"My move from Sochaux to Leipzig [2017] was a fairly massive one, and things went quite well there. I was able to put in some decent performances and to develop a bit as a player.

"Moving from Leipzig to Liverpool is a bit like jumping in at the deep end if I could put it like that. I guess it's true when you look at it, you could say that Sochaux to Liverpool in four years is fairly impressive. But it's only just the beginning, I have to keep working and I hope to reach the highest level."

BUNDESLIGA BASICS

"Playing at Leipzig was a new and different culture to France, and a country where the mentality is a bit different. They were four very happy years there and I gained lots of experience, playing in two German Cup finals and we also finished runners-up in the league, third twice and I think sixth in my first season. So, I reckon my four years there really served me well.

"I was sad, of course, not to have picked up one trophy at least while I was there but here's hoping that we can be doing that further down the line in my time here."

QUESTIONS QUESTIONS

"This was actually my first transfer where money has been paid for me, as I'd gone to Leipzig on a free. That brings with it a lot of pressure in the sense that you ask yourself whether or not you are making the right decision, whether you should make the move; is it too big a club for you, will you be getting a game? There are all these questions going through your mind.

"Then you have the media following it and you're obliged to follow the news these days. You have friends and family, and it's mainly your mates because your family understands, but every day you're getting texts asking, 'Is it true, is it true?'

"But the fact is that it's all part of the game. It's a decision that you have to make, and then when you have made it, you can't have any regrets. It was all quite emotional. There were some nights where, I'm not saying they were sleepless but I'd be thinking it all over: 'Oh wow, it's Liverpool – what do I do?!'"

DECISIONS DECISIONS

"Before signing you always ask yourself if it's the right choice to make the move in the sense that I was at Leipzig, relatively comfortable, about to play in the Champions League. But then you know that if you leave, it's another standard of football, it's a club where you're going to be alongside some superb players but maybe you won't get straight in the side, meaning there is a 'for' and an 'against'.

"But you have to make a decision and you have to make it pretty quickly because you can't let the days and weeks just slip by.

"I told myself that if a club was ready to spend that kind of money on me and at the same time one of the very best coaches in the world wanted me, when all that is lined up in front of you, you feel there is a trust.

"I think I made the correct decision and everyone around me backed me up by saying that it was the best decision I could have made."

BEST LEAGUE IN THE WORLD

"My coach, Jürgen Klopp, knows about the differences between the Bundesliga and the Premier League a lot better than me, because he was at Mainz and Dortmund, and then came to the Premier League.

"He's a very experienced manager so I think you have to trust him because he knows what he's talking about and he knows what he's doing. I think there is a huge contrast between the Bundesliga and the Premier League – it's another league in many ways. There is a higher tempo and intensity, and often the players are a lot more experienced.

"Every opposition team is difficult to play against, and they all have great support behind them when you play them at their ground. All these factors make the Premier League the best league in the world right now.

"In terms of atmosphere in the stadiums, it was good in the Bundesliga, but I don't think there's a player around who would tell you that anywhere else can compare to the Premier League. The whole environment is totally different.

"Anfield is incredible. Even the people who don't come along to the stadium and watch on their TVs, they still feel that this club has a history which runs very deep. You feel the real love that the fans have for the club."

THANKING MY FRIENDS

"People on social media saw the shirt-number celebration and the fireworks with my family and friends back home after I signed.

"To be honest, I'd had that idea in mind for a few years. I said to myself that if I go to a big club one day, I'm definitely going to do something like that, and why not with my friends and in my own neighbourhood? Because that's where I started out playing football and they are the people who, ahead of everyone else, most deserve to see that.

"It really warmed my heart to do that with them all because you could say they are my biggest fans, and it was them who gave me their support before everyone else. Returning their favour by doing something like that with them was the least I could do."





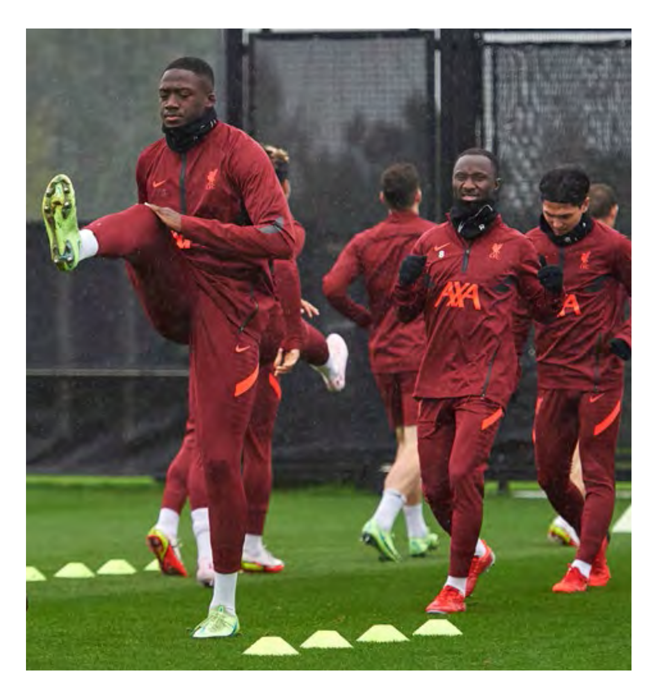
I can still improve a lot about my game. Everything can be worked on and this makes me happy

LIVING THE DREAM
"I'd always hoped to play in the Premier League one day. Maybe from when I was at Sochaux or even when I was a bit younger at Paris FC. They were dreams which have today become reality.

"It's true to say that leaving for Germany aged 18 isn't the easiest thing to do. But as we all know you have to adapt to all kinds of different circumstances in football and I think that I did manage to settle in and things went pretty well there. If not, I wouldn't be here today, I guess."

NEW SURROUNDINGS
"I've settled in really well. The French-speaking players have helped me to integrate more easily into the squad. There was no real language barrier between me and the rest of the squad, so it's gone pretty well.

"My English is okay! I'm going to be having lessons so it can be perfect in the end, but yes, I'm getting by fine."



LEARNING CURVE
"Of course it's been a big change for me because I was at Leipzig with a lot of young players. We were just like a band of mates really. But then when you move up to another level, where you play alongside players who are known throughout the world – some of them the best in the world in their position – it is a bit awe-inspiring.

"There's the fact that you're sharing a dressing-room with them and all that, but once you're out on the pitch, you have to put all that out of your mind – if not, you'll have a bad training session. It gives you renewed strength to be able to keep improving every day.

"I think I can still improve everything about my game. Everything can be worked on, apart from maybe my pace – I'm not sure if I can ever run any faster at all in my life! But there are still lots of areas where I can get better.

"This is what makes me happy and makes me keep working hard every day because I tell myself that if right now I manage to deliver what I do out on the pitch with the ability that I have today, knowing deep down that I can still improve, I ask myself: how far can I go with even better attributes?"

GROUP DYNAMICS
"My former Leipzig team-mate Dayot Upamecano also moved this summer, joining Bayern Munich. We speak all the time and send messages ahead of Champions League games and big league fixtures wishing each other all the best. He's my brother and I also keep in touch with the lads at Leipzig regularly too. We have a group chat. We have a friendship that I hope will last beyond the end of our football careers."

THE BOSS
"When I had agreed to the move, we had quite a few phone conversations and we discussed a whole bunch of different things. We spoke a lot and for a long time.

"From the very first call, I sensed a connection and a feeling of trust that I might receive from this great coach. If you're asking me to speak about him, I really don't have the words. He is a top, top coach.

"So I felt a certain trust there and also that this club had a legendary status and was different to any other. I almost felt like I was actually here, even before I had signed. All those factors were very important in making my decision to join the club.

"I'm not the sort of player that feels the need for the coach to be speaking with him all the time. But he does speak to you and tries to explain things to you on the pitch, and that's important. On the field, when there is something where I need to improve, he'll come over to me and explain.

"When he gives his pre-match team talk, you can feel his football experience and that he truly understands the game. He's Jürgen Klopp!"

ON VIRGIL
"I reckon that every central defender in the world will have Virgil Van Dijk as a reference, along with Sergio Ramos. They are players that you need to watch. By doing that, you can be inspired to be able to one day reach their level.

"Virgil is really laid-back and relaxed ahead of a game. He'll have a laugh with you to relax you a bit if he sees you might be looking a bit tense. He's more experienced than me and he sees certain things that I don't.

"Once we're out on the pitch he gives me advice on certain stuff. But then we communicate a lot together and when we're out there during a game, as Kylian Mbappe says, age doesn't count for anything! Which means that even when he does something, I can make a comment and in return he'll tell me stuff because we have to help each other out.

"He has that aura about him and you sense he is a leader in this team, either through his words or his performances. You can really feel that, whether it be in training or during a game."

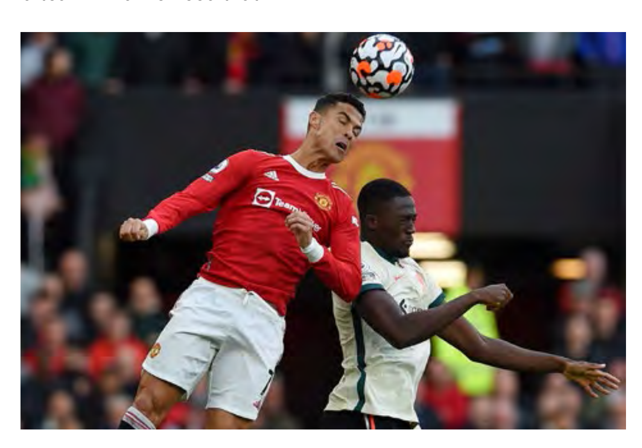




SALAH'S STATS

"Mo's been in great form and he's a super guy. On a human level he is great as a person. I have a lot of laughs with him all the time.

"He's just amazing on the pitch. Even me, at the end of some games, I'll say to him [laughing] 'Two more again today!' He'll laugh. 'When are you going to stop! You need to calm down! [still laughing]. But no, I hope he keeps going and scores many more goals this season because that really helps us out in a big way as a team. And we need that."



TAKING ON RONALDO

"It was a dream of mine to play against Cristiano Ronaldo and it was crazy being on the pitch playing against him. He is an idol for young players like us, And it's something I dreamed about when I was younger, playing against him.

"But when I was in Germany, I told myself that I was never going to get the chance to play against Cristiano, I was in the Bundesliga and he was in Italy. Even after joining Liverpool I'd thought that that was it, I'd never play against him. And then when I saw he'd signed for Manchester United I thought: I might just have the chance to play against him!

"It was just a dream ahead of the game but as soon as we were on the pitch, it's no longer a dream. Of course we were going into battle against the opposition team. After coming off the field I was very happy to have played against him, but not just that – I was very happy also that we'd put in that massive performance away at Manchester United.

"Like the coach said, I don't know if that will ever happen again one day. So, it was something that will pretty much go down in history and I'm happy to have been a part of something so historic."

FRENCH CONNECTION

"Of course I think about playing for the senior France team – any French player thinks about it.

"I'm lucky right now to be playing in what for me is the best league in the world. Didier Deschamps knows that he needs players who are playing regularly and are performing well. I have played well in my recent games, that's true, but I don't think that is enough because I haven't featured in many games. I have to keep working hard and doing my best.

"Right now I am in one of the best teams in the world and so I believe that if I get a good run of games and I'm in good form, there's no reason why I won't get my opportunity at one moment or another.

"I'm going to be patient and keep working hard and if all goes well, it will come along sooner or later."


KONATÉ
5
KONATÉ
5
From the very first call, I sensed a connection and a feeling of trust that I might receive from this great coach. If you're asking me to speak about him, I really don't have the words. He is a top, top coach



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Joie
Buy to Let
new balance
BETVICTOR

SO LONG, EDDIE

At the end of the season, after 10 years at Liverpool, sporting director Michael Edwards is moving on and leaving the club in the safest hands

"At a football club there's a holy trinity: the players, the manager and the supporters. Directors don't come into it. They are only there to sign the cheques."

Of all the famous quotes that Bill Shankly made, this one particularly resonated with Kopites. It was Shankly, after all, who insisted on his appointment in 1959 that he alone should be responsible for team selection, whereas the Liverpool board of directors had previously picked the starting XI.

When it came to signing players, however, Bill couldn't do it all by himself. He hired ex-Reds defender Geoff Twentyman as his chief scout in 1967, for instance, but long before then he worked with the LFC board to sign players.

Certain directors did more than just sign cheques and there is no finer example than when Ian St John was bought from Motherwell in 1960.

The 22-year-old centre-forward had been on Shankly's radar for a couple of years and on Sunday 30 April 1960 the Liverpool manager spotted a story in a Scottish Sunday newspaper that suggested Motherwell were prepared to sell the Saint.

"First thing on Monday morning I saw my chairman, Mr TV Williams, and told him of what I had seen," wrote Shankly in a *Liverpool Echo* column that was turned into *Shankly: The Lost Diary* to mark what would have been his 100th birthday in 2013.

"At his suggestion I telephoned the Motherwell club and spoke to their manager, Bobby Ancell. Within two hours, a party consisting of the chairman, the vice-chairman [Mr SC Reakes] and myself were on our way north."

The travelling party watched St John play in a cup match against Hamilton Academical then began negotiations with the Motherwell board at 9.30pm. Shankly explained how they got the deal done.

"The tug-o-war dragged on until well past midnight and eventually agreement was reached. While all this was going on, Ian St John and his wife had been waiting patiently in another room.

"When you are in the dentist's waiting room, eventually your turn must come and so it must have seemed to Ian as we talked. Naturally, we kept them in suspense for as short a time as possible, so immediately when we reached agreement, we informed them.

"The Motherwell directors had now completed their part of the transaction. We had the most delicate part still to do and that was to persuade this great little player and his wife that it would be in their interests to come to Liverpool.

"This was not as difficult as the earlier part of the night had been and we agreed with them that they would travel back to Merseyside the following day.

"The idea was that they could have a look at the place and consider what we had to offer in the way of accommodation. We set off by road and arrived at Anfield late in the afternoon.

"St John was introduced to the members of the board and was then whisked away by car with Mrs St John to view the house we had in mind for them. My male readers will understand my relief when they returned with the news that Bette St John was extremely pleased with what was to be her future home.

"We informed St John that we were offering him exactly the same pay that the nucleus of the team were receiving and that nobody was being paid more. The assurance satisfied him at once and he signed without hesitation."

It's fair to say, in the 61 years that have followed, the way transfer business is conducted has changed dramatically. And not just because players have agents.

Jürgen Klopp didn't drive up to Hull with Tom Werner and Mike Gordon to sign Andy Robertson in 2017 because he'd seen a story in the Sunday Mirror saying Robbo was available.

There was no need to. Not when you work with 'Eddie'.



LIVERPOOL'S TRANSFER GURU

The son of a lorry driver, 42-year-old Michael Edwards grew up in Fareham, a market town near Portsmouth. Nicknamed 'Eddie', he played youth-team football for Peterborough United, generally at right-back, and progressed to the reserves but was released in 1997 having failed to make a first-team appearance.

Having attended college as a youth player, he headed to the University of Sheffield to take a degree in business management and informatics.

After a period working as an IT teacher back in Peterborough, he got his break in football in December 2003 when former Posh team-mate Simon Wilson recommended him to his boss at Prozone, a fledgling data-analysis company.

Michael was taken on and placed at Harry Redknapp's Portsmouth as head of football analysis, studying the performances of Pompey players (including ex-Reds Peter Crouch and David James), future opponents and transfer targets.

"On Mondays he used to be the first port of call for myself and a good few of the other boys," former Portsmouth defender Richard Hughes told *Bleacher Report*. "We'd go into his office and have our stats read back to us on how we'd performed at the weekend.

"A lot of people in those roles come from a non-footballing background and sometimes they find fitting into the atmosphere of a football club quite difficult. Michael was different because he had an opinion and he let you know it.

"He's got a great sense of humour and wasn't afraid to tell me or even my more illustrious team-mates that we'd been garbage at the weekend, statistically speaking. He was the first person with that job description that I'd come across as a player."

Edwards was at Fratton Park for almost six years – Portsmouth twice finished in the Premier League top ten and won the FA Cup during his time there – before moving to Tottenham Hotspur in November 2009 as their



head of performance analysis, again working under Redknapp.

He'd spend only two years at Spurs, however, as in 2011 he was identified by Liverpool director of football strategy Damien Comolli as the man to overhaul Liverpool's data analysis ops.

Michael arrived at Anfield as head of performance analysis in November that year and, like the off-the-field equivalent of an Academy player, worked his way up through the ranks to become director of technical performance in June 2013, technical director in August 2015 and sporting director in November 2016.

Inevitably there were bumps along the road, the most high-profile being the 'transfer committee' during Brendan Rodgers' time as manager. But one of his first jobs as technical director in 2015 was to recommend who should replace Rodgers as Liverpool manager.

He drew up a three-man shortlist and recommended that Fenway Sports Group should appoint Jürgen Klopp. It's worked out pretty well!

A year and a month later, Edwards became Liverpool FC's sporting director – a role which broadly speaking focuses on the football structure and allows the CEO to concentrate on the business side of the club – and it was an appointment with which Klopp was delighted.

"It will make us better and stronger in managing the process of building and retaining playing talent at all age groups," said the Liverpool manager. "Development is so important and it makes sense to have a position, within the football structure specifically, that focuses on where we can improve.

"It's no secret I like the concept of a sporting director and having worked under this model previously, I have found it to be nothing but positive and forward-thinking. Michael is absolutely the right person for this."

In keeping with Shankly's philosophy regarding 'directors', Edwards has opted to stay low-profile. He doesn't do media interviews and gets recognised so rarely that few Liverpool supporters spotted him in 2019 on the back of the podium in Madrid, recording footage of Klopp and his players celebrating with the European Cup on his phone. Instead he's gone about his business quietly and successfully.

There are numerous examples to choose from, but when the manager needed a new left-back in 2017, Edwards and his team had already identified Andy Robertson as the perfect candidate, subsequently set up the deal with Hull City and secured the future captain of Scotland for what was essentially a player exchange (give or take a few million) for midfielder Kevin Stewart.

Completing such good business was precisely why Edwards was given the job in the first place. Ultimately it is the sporting director's responsibility to identify players and acquire them but also to sell and secure new contracts for those the manager wishes to retain.

PLAYERS SIGNED SINCE MICHAEL EDWARDS WAS LFC SPORTING DIRECTOR:

Mo Salah; Dominic Solanke; Andy Robertson; Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain; Virgil van Dijk; Naby Keita; Fabinho; Xherdan Shaqiri; Alisson; Sepp van den Berg; Harvey Elliott; Adrian; Andy Lonergan; Takumi Minamino; Kostas Tsimikas; Thiago; Diogo Jota; Marcelo Pitaluga; Ben Davies; Kaide Gordon; Ibrahima Konate.



PLAYERS SOLD/RELEASED SINCE MICHAEL EDWARDS WAS LFC SPORTING DIRECTOR:

Tiago Ilori; Alex Manninger; Andre Wisdom; Lucas; Kevin Stewart; Mamadou Sakho; Philippe Coutinho; Cameron Brannagan; Lloyd Jones; Emre Can; Danny Ward; Ragnar Klavan; Dominic Solanke; Lazar Markovic; Rafael Camacho; Daniel Sturridge; Alberto Moreno; Adam Bogdan; Connor Randall; Danny Ings; Simon Mignolet; Ryan Kent; Bobby Duncan; Allan; Pedro Chirivella; Nathaniel Clyne; Andy Lonergan; Dejan Lovren; Adam Lallana; Ovie Ejaria; Ki-Jana Hoever; Rhian Brewster; Herbie Kane; Yasser Larouci; Gini Wijnaldum; Kamil Grabara; Liam Millar; Marko Grujic; Taiwo Awoniyi; Harry Wilson; Xherdan Shaqiri.

When all is said and done, a successful team comes down to signing good players and the manager getting the most out of them on a consistent basis. Shankly did it in the 1960s and Klopp is doing it now.

But whereas there used to be far greater responsibility on a manager to identify and acquire players – Shanks even missed some Liverpool games to scout future signings – the process now is a collective effort throughout the club.

Head of recruitment Dave Fallows, chief scout Barry Hunter, director of research Dr Ian Graham and head of loans David Woodfine – and the teams they manage – have all played their parts in building the Liverpool squad. All were brought to Anfield by Edwards, as was assistant sporting director Julian Ward.

Retaining key players – and Klopp himself – on new contracts has also been a key achievement. Liverpool was not perceived as a 'destination' club when Michael arrived at Anfield in 2011, with Fernando Torres, Luis Suarez, Raheem Sterling and Philippe Coutinho all opting to move on. Yet the Coutinho deal in January 2018 was a line in the sand.

Edwards negotiated a stunning transfer fee with Barcelona for the Brazilian and effectively used the proceeds to sign Virgil van Dijk and Alisson. The arrival of a world class centre-half and goalkeeper turned the progressive Reds from beaten Europa League and Champions League finalists to champions of everything – winning the Champions League, UEFA Super Cup, FIFA Club World Cup and the holy-grail Premier League title in the space of 13 months.

But for the pandemic, they'd have done it in less than a year and the net-spend boys will tell you that in the four-and-a-half years leading up to Liverpool's 2020 Premier League win the club had the fifth-lowest net spend in the division with only Crystal Palace, Sheffield United, Southampton and Norwich City behind them.

Indeed, some of the transfer fees Edwards has recouped by selling certain players has added to his legend among supporters, particularly on social media where he's become something of a cult figure with Kopites who think he could sell ice to an eskimo.

It's been a remarkably successful partnership between Edwards and Klopp, who it should be remembered has the final say on player recruitment.

When Michael was appointed in late 2016, a club statement said his role would also involve 'taking primary responsibility for reviewing and implementing improvements to the training ground environment and infrastructure'. He didn't waste any time.

In February 2017 the club announced it would be leaving Melwood for a new facility on the same site as the Academy. Two years ago last month, on 17 November 2019, the state-of-the-art AXA Training Centre opened.

Overseeing that development, and the successful transition from West Derby to Kirkby, has been a key part of Edwards'

remit. Having now helped to take Liverpool forward in so many ways off the pitch he feels ready for a new challenge. 'Eddie' will leave the club when his own contract expires at the end of the 2021/22 season.

To explain his decision, and pay tribute to those he has worked with during the last decade, Michael wrote a letter to supporters…

FROM MICHAEL'S OPEN LETTER…

"Ten years, that's a pretty long time in anyone's working life. In football terms, it is an era in itself, particularly at a club like Liverpool where the expectations and standards are never anything other than as high as the supporters deserve.

"To be part of this club during this period has been a privilege due to the people I have been fortunate enough to work with and the success we have enjoyed.

"But all good things must come to an end and, in my case, I recently completed my final summer window as Liverpool sporting director.

"Even writing those words seems a bit surreal, but at the end of this season I will pack up my laptop and leave my office at the AXA Training Centre for the last time. Before I do so, though, I wanted to take this opportunity to explain the reasons why I'm moving on because I'm a great believer that supporters deserve clarity at times like this.

"The last thing I want is unfounded speculation, particularly as I know the Liverpool Football Club that I am leaving behind couldn't be in better hands.

"As with most people my age, I would often watch Liverpool on the TV when I was growing up, with them being one of the most dominant sides in English football in my earlier years…

"I knew the way Liverpool players represented this club set a standard for everyone to live up to. You literally had to be the best, or be capable of contributing to being the best as part of a collective, so not in a million years did I imagine back then that I would actually end up at Anfield and certainly not in the role I have operated in for the past five years.

"I had always planned to cap my time at the club to a maximum of 10 years. I've loved working here, but I am a big believer in change. I think it's good for the individual and, in a work setting, good for the employer, too.

"Over my time here we have changed so many things (hopefully for the better) but someone new brings a different perspective, new ideas and can hopefully build on (or change) the things that have been put in place beforehand.

"That's how I believe businesses/football clubs stay ahead; you need to evolve and at the heart of this kind of process is always people. That evolution has always been central to Liverpool's history and I hope that this is one thing that doesn't change.

"As my wife would testify, I'm not great at the here and now. I've always looked ahead and for the past couple of years I've





known that the time for me to leave this role was approaching and I think it is entirely fitting that the person to take over from me is Julian Ward.

"As was the case with myself, I doubt you will hear much from him, but on this occasion I will speak on his behalf in the knowledge that what I have to say will be greeted with widespread agreement by everyone who has come across him both inside and outside the club.

"Julian has been building up the skill-set for this role for many years and there are countless elements of his development that could be highlighted, none more so than the outstanding work he did in creating our loan department six years ago.

"It was during this period that he not only laid the groundwork for a long-term process that continues to provide significant benefit to players and club, he also accelerated his learning on many of the aspects you deal with as a sporting director.

"Last year, he took on the role of assistant sporting director and over the past 12 months he has been introduced to other facets of the role that are vital to its success.

"Again, Julian's elevation is wholly in keeping with what I believe to be a key factor of the Liverpool Way, with promotion from within ensuring expertise, experience and institutional knowledge are cherished in the way that they should be.

"Over the remainder of this season, I will continue to support him as we complete the leadership transition, working closely with Mike Gordon – the man who never sleeps.

"When I informed Mike of my decision to leave, I said I hoped the next partnership he has is as good as the one I have shared with him. Along with Jürgen and Brendan before him, we have had a lot of decisions to make over the years, some of which have worked better than others but all of which have been taken in the best interests of Liverpool FC.

"Mike shuns the limelight, most of you wouldn't recognise him if he walked down the street (which I have always found funny) but he is a seriously smart man, hard-working, strategic and able to connect with such a wide range of people.

"It was Mike who promoted me and believed in me. He gave me the opportunity and, having done so, he then gave me a lot of autonomy and responsibility, something that I will always appreciate…

"By their own admission, FSG may have got a few things wrong but it is sometimes easy to overlook the ton of things that they have got right and as someone who has worked closely with them for a long time I know just how passionate they are about winning and about the club.

"The transformation of Liverpool from the club I joined a decade ago is such that there aren't too many similarities beyond the name and for this Mike, in particular, should get a lot of the credit.

"If I ever meet anyone, they inevitably ask me about signings or players we have sold and I know transfers are one of the exciting parts of the role that I have performed. It can be a lot of fun buying and selling and it's something I have enjoyed,




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particularly when players we have brought in have made a positive difference.

"Like everything, though, there is a team of people that have worked alongside me whose hard work and combined expertise should never be overlooked or understated.

"Dave Fallows and Barry Hunter joined Liverpool the year after me and they have been integral in building a world-class scouting department.

"For those who don't know Barry – and there can't be many – he was a hard-hitting Northern Irish centre-back who has a contacts book that reads like a who's who of football. He is always on the go and could put away more food than the average male elephant.

"Dave is simply Google, I've never known anyone with a memory like his or an ability to think outside of the box when innovative solutions are required.

"For years I have been labelled 'stats man', which those who know me best find pretty funny. Of course, we do have a stats man. His name is Ian Graham and like Dave and Barry he joined not long after me from a company called Decision Technology.

"Knowing he was a Liverpool fan was enough for John Henry and myself to persuade him to actually join a club rather than act as consultant to one. Ian and his team (Daf, Tim and Will) are geniuses in my eyes and without doubt the best in their field in world football.

"Contrary to popular belief, we don't sign players off 'stats' but the information provided from their research does play a crucial role in our decision-making. Whether it is video, written reports, data, background checks or good old-fashioned scouting from the stand, it all goes into the big decision-making melting pot. And when you make a decision, all this information allows you to do is mitigate the risk you are taking.

"Outside of these guys, Woody [David Woodfine] has been there to glue things together. A former officer from the Royal Navy who I have known for many years, he is the most organised man you could ever meet (you should see him pack a suitcase) as well as being a problem solver who gets things done.

"Together we have been a team and alongside the hard work and dedication of Jonathan Bamber, Preston Jones and Danny Stanway we have been the group of people who have helped the club 'buy and sell' many of the players over recent years.

"Outside of this is the most important part of all – the manager and the players. Without these guys nothing happens. Harry Redknapp once told me, "It's all about the players, Ed" and he's right. The dedication these guys put in and the pressure they are under to perform at a club like Liverpool is immense.

"I have huge respect for each and every one of them and the success that they have enjoyed in recent years is richly deserved in every single case. They are fortunate to play for a club like Liverpool and Liverpool are fortunate to have them.

"One of the other questions I always get asked is 'Who was/is your favourite player?' That's a really difficult question to answer so I won't even try. All I will say is my dog is called Bobby.

"When we sign a player, Jürgen will always say 50 per cent is on him and 50 per cent is on the player himself to succeed. I don't think anyone needs me to talk about Jürgen and what he has done for the club, but I think the timing of his arrival and the implementation of his philosophy and his character as a leader will be remembered at Liverpool forever.

"Being manager of Liverpool is probably harder than playing (the shirt hangs heavy, so they say), but he has delivered so much joy to the fans and reasserted so many of the club's historical values that he will go down in history as one of the club's managerial greats.

"He is a demanding man – he wants to win, whether it's padel tennis or a Champions League final – and he has led the team incredibly well over my time at LFC.

"Julian and Jürgen have a very good relationship and moving forward I am confident that they will bring the club more success.

"There are so many more special people that I have worked with at LFC that I could mention and that's what makes the club such a great place to work. But with the new training ground complete, many of the core players committed to the club through long-term contracts and some of the hard work translated into trophies, as I said at the start: it's time for me to move on.

"While I'll be around throughout the remainder of the season, I wanted to use this opportunity to place on record my sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone I have worked with and express my gratitude to FSG for giving me the opportunity. YNWA."

INTRODUCING JULIAN WARD

When the news broke, Jürgen Klopp wished "Michael and his wonderful family all the best, for whatever they choose to do next… He has been a constant presence during my period at LFC and his contribution to our success is clear for everyone to see."

FSG president and Liverpool board member Mike Gordon also paid tribute to the work Michael has done and explained why Julian Ward will be promoted as his replacement.

"It is, of course, disappointing to be losing in due course a person as talented as Michael, but we respect his wishes to seek a new challenge at the appropriate time for him. He and his amazing family will be missed at LFC…

"Having valued leaders who decide to move on is unfortunately part-and-parcel of running any organisation. It is our responsibility to make the best decisions for our immediate, medium and long-term future with any subsequent appointments and restructure.

"In this regard I firmly believe that in Julian Ward we are fortunate to have that leader already within our structure and I am very excited at the prospect of continuing to work with him through the transition as he assumes the role of sporting director when Michael eventually departs, particularly as I have no doubt that he is more than absolutely ready for the new responsibilities that he will take on.





"Michael's contribution and achievements will stand the test of time given the role he has played in helping to rebuild and shape the club into what we see today, but a more substantial tribute and recognition can be paid when he actually departs.

"Importantly, we believe we have a lot of elite, industry-leading individuals as part of the wider football operations team, all of whom will of course remain with us, working with and supporting Julian."

Clearly Ward is regarded extremely highly within Liverpool Football Club. The 40-year-old will step into the job having already worked as loans and pathway manager with Jürgen Klopp, who says: "We have so many brilliant people here, all of whom contribute to what we have achieved and I have nothing but confidence we will continue to develop, progress and improve as an organisation."

Aintree-born Julian was with Manchester City when he was headhunted by Edwards in 2012. Before that he graduated from Liverpool John Moores University with a degree in science and football in 2002, having previously played at non-league level for Morecambe, and worked as a performance analyst for the FA for 18 months.

He took a job with Prozone in 2002 but left three months before Edwards started there, to become sports scholarship manager at Liverpool JMU.

Ward moved to Northern Ireland in 2005 to do a PhD at the University of Ulster, also playing for Larne FC and Lisburn Distillery. In 2008 he was hired by Portugal boss Carlos Quieroz to work as head of analysis and technical scouting and was part of their backroom staff at the 2010 World Cup finals in South Africa.

Manchester City appointed Ward as their South American scouting strategist in November 2010 and two years later he was persuaded to switch to Liverpool by Edwards, joining the club as European scouting manager for Spain and Portugal.

In October 2015, as part of a restructure when Klopp was appointed as manager, Julian became Liverpool's first loan pathways and football partnerships manager with part of his role being to find the best clubs for young Liverpool players to go on loan to to aid their development.

It is no coincidence that Leighton Clarkson is currently at Blackburn Rovers after Harvey Elliott did so well there, and the story of sending Rhys Williams to non-league Kidderminster to toughen him up physically is well told.

It's also widely believed that the club received higher transfer fees for Harry Wilson, Rhian Brewster and Ryan Kent among others following successful loans. Edwards deserves a lot of credit for that, but it was Ward who found the right clubs to loan them to.

"If you have to go on loan, the best thing that can happen to you is that you have a contract with Liverpool because then Jules is looking after you," said Klopp in 2020. "He's doing an incredible job."

Evidently so because a year ago this month, in December 2020, Ward was promoted to become assistant sporting director and has since worked on both transfers and contract renewals.

Edwards leaves big trainers to fill, but Ward's promotion to sporting director fits the old Liverpool adage of promoting from within.

Continuity was an LFC watchword under the club's most successful chairman, Sir John Smith, who promoted Bob Paisley to manager in 1974 when Shankly retired and followed the same philosophy when handing the keys to the manager's office to Joe Fagan in 1983 and Kenny Dalglish in 1985.

If the modern-day continuity of replacing Liverpool's sporting director with his assistant works as well as that did, history may well recall Julian Ward as one of Michael Edwards' shrewdest signings.



ALISSON SAVES!



It's what he does best, so let's celebrate our main man between the posts with a gallery of gloved-up action shots from this season so far

KICKING OFF

Alisson Becker was at his best in Liverpool's first fixture of the 2021/22 season, a 5.30pm kick-off won 3-0 by Liverpool at Norwich City on Saturday 14 August.

Of the next four months he's said: "So far so good. I think we are having really good performances, bringing back the consistency that we used to have on the pitch – this is something really important for a team who wants to fight for the title, and I really believe this season will be one of the hardest of all the other seasons that I played so far.

"But we need to focus on ourselves. Don't look at the others too much because if you look at others, you lose the focus on yourself, you lose the focus on what you need to do in the challenges. I believe in my team, my team-mates and our quality. I really believe we can fight for the title again.

"We don't have the biggest list of players but we have the players we need to give a proper fight, to give [it] a proper try for the title. We need to just think game-by-game, match-by-match, focus always on the next challenge, focus on ourselves in what we need to do.

"Everybody needs to be ready – even the players who are not playing so much so far. They need to be in a good shape because we will need everybody in the long-term perspective."









ITALIAN JOB

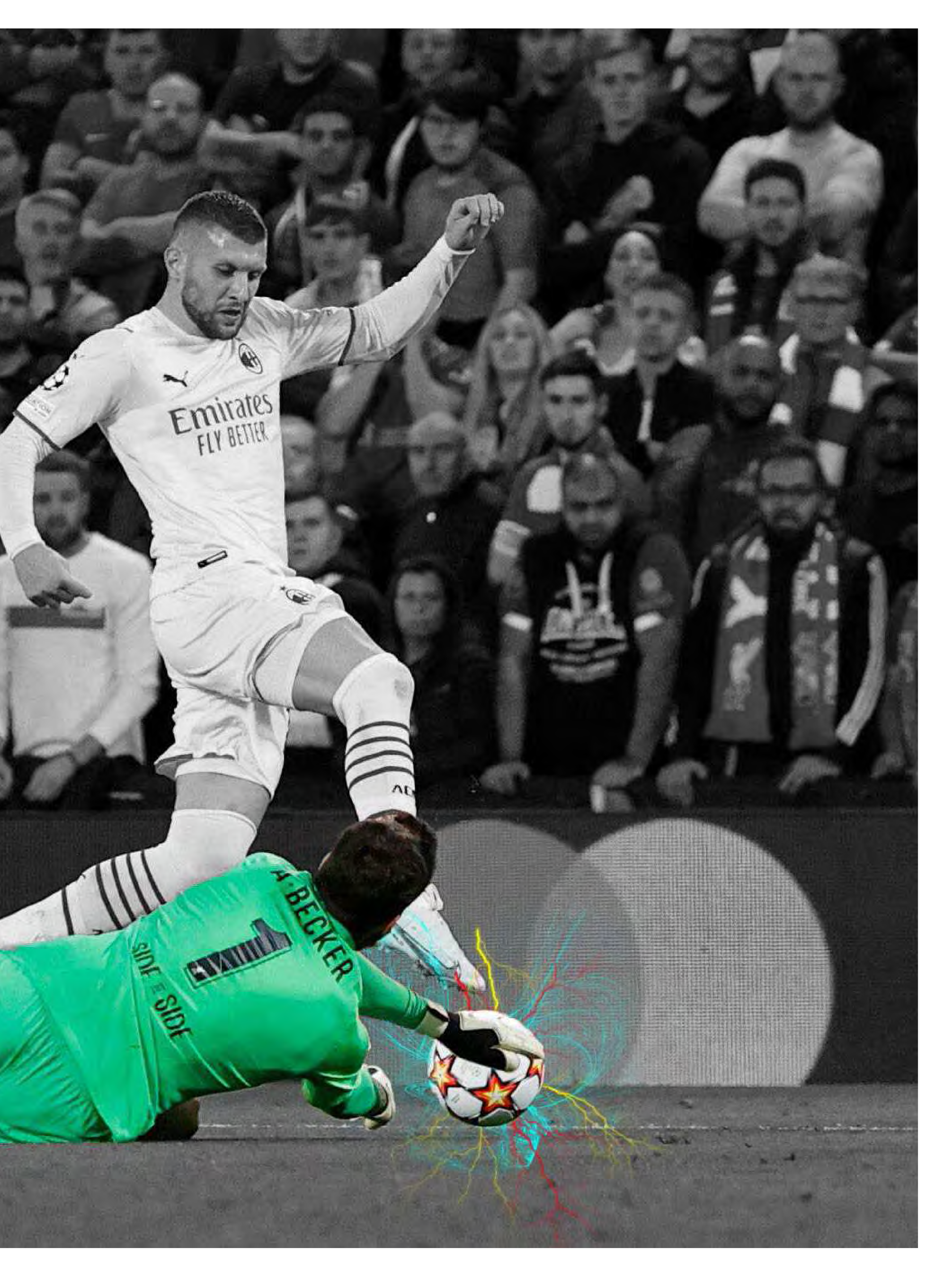
Despite Liverpool's dominant form in this season's Champions League group stage, Alisson has been called upon at key moments to pull off big saves, as he did against AC Milan in the opener at Anfield in September.

Ahead of that match he also revealed that the 2005 Champions League final had been an inspiration. "[Milan keeper] Dida was really an influence for me – not only for me but for all the Brazilian goalkeepers. The success he had in Europe, in Italy, he was really a role model for all goalkeepers.

"But that was an unbelievable game. Kaka [was] playing as well. I had the luck to meet them personally, to play together with them, to learn from them personally. So that game was something amazing to see, even now, bringing back the memories.

"I think there are unbelievable memories for all LFC supporters. Those players are an inspiration for me and for all my team-mates.

"This season our first aim obviously was to get through to the next phase of the tournament, but obviously the biggest goal in the Champions League is winning it."


Emirates
FLY BETTER
BECKER





KEEPING IT CLEAN

Crystal Palace were the fourth team in Liverpool's five opening Premier League fixtures this season to draw a blank against the Reds, with Alisson keeping them at bay at Anfield on 18 September during a 3-0 home win.

Up to and including the home victory over Arsenal on 20 November, he had made 111 appearances in the Premier League and kept 50 clean sheets…and of course previously scored once (at West Brom) and provided an assist (for Mo Salah at home to Manchester United).

This season has seen him surpass Jerzy Dudek's total of 49 clean sheets and becomes only the tenth keeper in LFC's proud history to achieve a half-century of league shut-outs.

He reflects: "Having clean sheets is really important, not only for me but for the team. When you keep a clean sheet you are halfway to the victory and halfway to the work being done, so keeping the clean sheet is a target for us for every game.

"Everyone is focused on that and everybody works for achieving our goals, from the strikers backwards."

ACCESS DENIED

But for Alisson's exploits, draws could easily have become defeats in a couple of games – he was outstanding against both Manchester City and Brighton & Hove Albion at Anfield.

Earlier this season he delighted Liverpool supporters by penning a new long-term deal with the club. The no1, who turned 29 in October, admitted he's not normally one for long-term planning but the chance to extend his stay with the Reds made perfect sense.

"I like to live the moment: this season, the next challenge, the next game, taking things step-by-step. But I am really happy because me and my family are settled in the club and in this country.

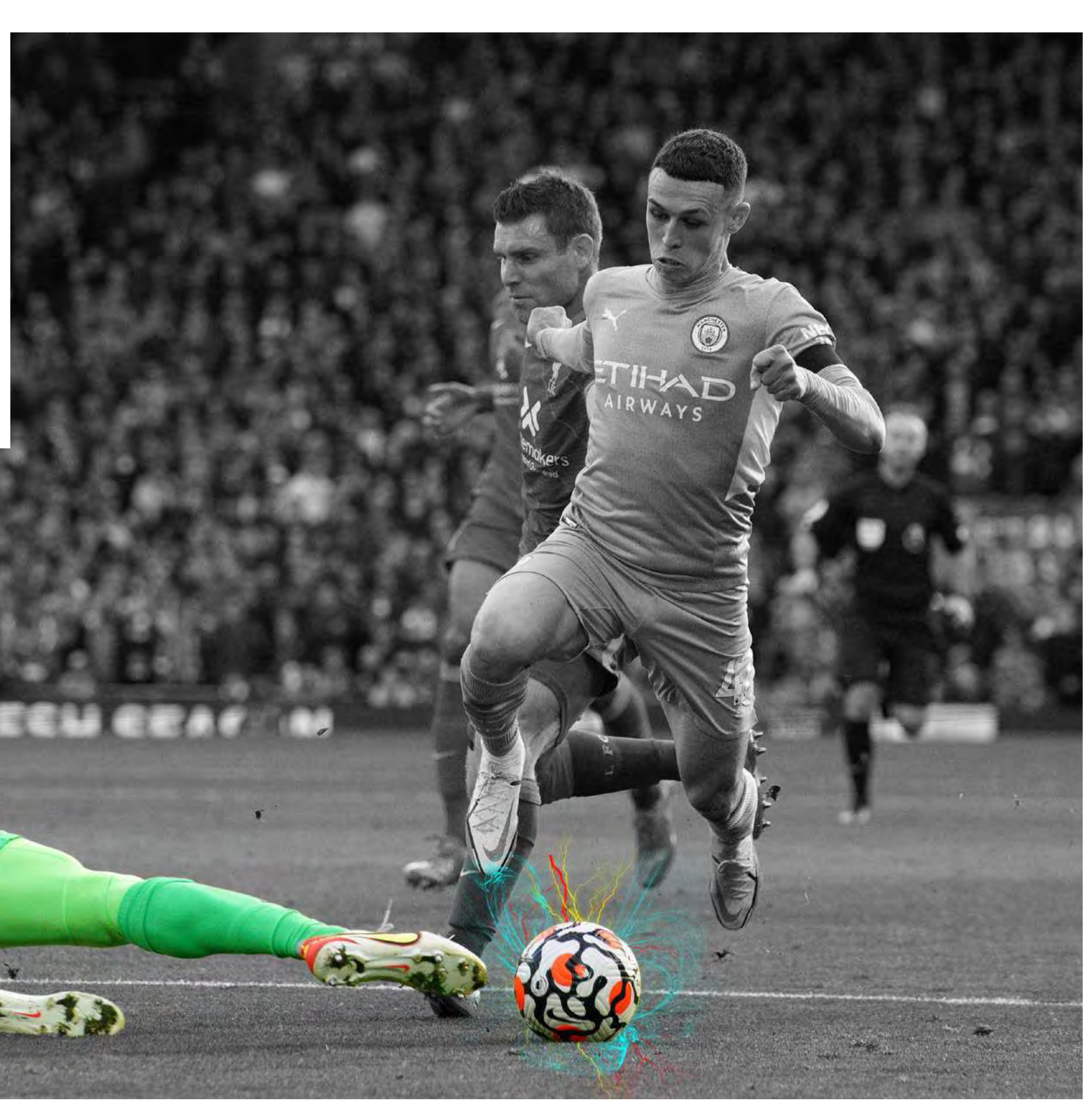
"So yes, I have no problem to play out most of my career here. I am really happy about this deal and I can see that the supporters and the people in the club are happy as well."

Something else that has made Alisson happy is the sight of a full Anfield again: "Football without fans is not football – the feeling you experience when you have your supporters with you on the pitch is amazing.

"To have them on our side, they really can be an extra player on the pitch and help us with the way we play, pushing us forward, giving that extra energy for us in the game when it's needed.

"When we score a goal and I look back and I can see the Kop celebrating, it's a really good feeling."




ETIHAD
AIRWAYS


A·BECKER
1
SIDE SIDE



ATLETICO AWAY

Alisson's top-drawer saves against Atletico Madrid in the Estadio Wanda Metropolitano were absolutely pivotal, the Reds having gone into an early two-goal lead only to be pegged back and put under immense pressure before clinching what Jürgen Klopp called three "dirty points."

Our man denied the lethal Antoine Griezmann and his Atletico team-mates Joao Felix and Thomas Lemar to earn the man-of-the-match accolade in the Spanish capital.

He then kept clean sheets in Liverpool's subsequent two home games in the tournament against Atletico and FC Porto. Ahead of the latter fixture, as well as his gloves he donned the skipper's armband, revealing: "The players did a vote for this – for extra captains. It's a pleasure, an honour for me.

"We have an amazing captain [in Jordan Henderson] but we have a lot of leaders on the team who are not wearing the band on the arm, many leaders that play important roles. It's really important to have all these players on the team who can push the players forward when it's needed."



GOALKEEPING UNION

Hard though it is for his fellow keepers at Liverpool to displace Alisson between the posts for any length of time, his impeccable standards and sheer quality as a professional sportsman only serve to inspire them.

Spanish shot-stopper Adrian says: "Ali is a super, top goalkeeper – one of the best in the world. He shows [that] every game he is playing.

"As a goalkeeper you need to be complete in all departments, and Ali is one of the most complete goalkeepers I've trained with. He's good with his feet, he's powerful, he's calm, his distribution is great, his kicking is top. Then in goal his reactions, his composure, his body-language is great.

"Being together and helping each other is the most important thing in the goalkeeper mentality. The competition makes us better not just at our job but in life."

Youngster Caoimhin Kelleher adds: "I just want to push Alisson as far as I can in training and learn as much as I can from him."

Both Adrian and Kelleher will be hoping their colleague will be named Best FIFA Men's Goalkeeper, an accolade he last claimed in 2019. This time he's up against Gianluigi Donnarumma (PSG), Edouard Mendy (Chelsea), Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich) and Kasper Schmeichel (Leicester City) with the winner determined by votes from national-team coaches, captains, journalists and fans, and revealed at a ceremony in Zurich on 17 January. Reds fans can vote by visiting fifa.com.



WHEN SANTA WAS A KOPITE

Matches on Christmas Day? In the past, and for a long time, it was part of the festive football tradition for the Reds

Words: Chris McLoughlin

Kopites will be singing Yule Never Walk Alone at Anfield on Boxing Day before the Reds take on Leeds United in a rather early 12.30pm kick-off, but many years ago Christmas Day football was the norm. Between 1894 and 1957 the Reds played 39 official games – and several more during the wartime years – on the big day itself, including a couple of matches against Manchester United, but festive football began before Liverpool even existed.

Everton played two home games on Christmas Day 1888, both of them at Anfield. The Blues faced Blackburn Park Road in a Lancashire Cup tie on Christmas Day in the morning and, presumably after a quick nibble of turkey, then took on Ulster FC in an annual exhibition match.

They won 3-0 and Charles Jollifee, Everton's goalie, scored the third goal – although not in the same dramatic circumstances as Alisson at West Brom last season.

A year later in 1889 the first ever Football League match to be held on Christmas Day took place at Deepdale as champions Preston North End beat Aston Villa 3-2. The attendance of 9,000 was one of the highest ever seen for a First Division match and football clubs quickly cottoned on to the fact that there was a demand to see football on Christmas Day.

You might be wondering why. For those of us who celebrate Christmas, most traditions that day revolve around seeing family at home, opening presents, eating and drinking far too much and sleeping through various Christmas specials. But life was very different in Victorian Britain.

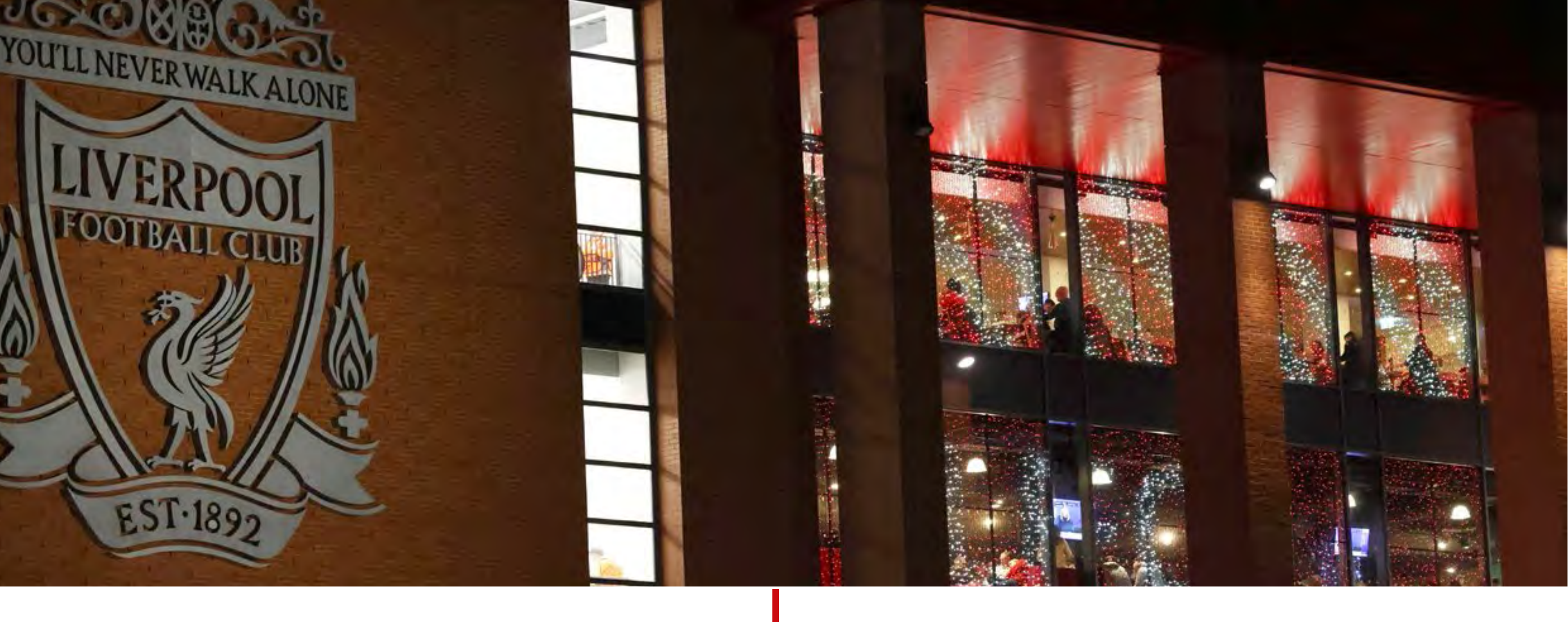
"For the working class, whose residences were often uncomfortable, overcrowded and unappealing, a rare day free from work was reason to take to the streets, not relax at home," professor Martin Johnes explained in the book *Christmas and the British*.

"Football was played on Christmas Day because it was a day off and there was a tradition of public working-class events. It was also at times played on Boxing Day meaning two games in two days."

While the Boxing Day tradition remains, Christmas Day games haven't been played since the late 1950s. Which is no bad thing when you realise Liverpool won only 13 of their 39 matches on 25 December.







It all began on Christmas Day 1894 when Liverpool were hurtling towards relegation. Having only won twice in their opening 18 matches, William Barclay's side travelled to Bolton Wanderers' old Pike's Lane ground, site of the first ever goal scored in a league match anywhere in the world.

Earlier that year a record attendance of 20,000 had seen Bolton beat the Reds 3-0 in Liverpool's first FA Cup third-round match, but only 8,000 braved the drizzle and fog to see the game settled by Jimmy Settle's fifth-minute goal in favour of the ho-ho-hosts.

"Liverpool, displaying some incredible combination, completely beat the opposing defence time after time," reported the *Liverpool Mercury*, "but [they] were frustrated by the heavy state of the ground."

Two years later, on 25 December 1896, newly-promoted Liverpool played their first Christmas Day match at Anfield against First Division champions and league leaders Aston Villa. It drew a crowd of 15,000 and they saw a festive thriller.

Frank Becton and George Allan put the Reds 2-0 up, but Villa got two back before the interval. A Becton penalty had Kopites ready to rock around the Christmas tree, but an 83rd-minute Charlie Athersmith equaliser earned the Villans a point.

"As a game full of beautiful and intricate movements, dashing runs and magnificent exchanges, the match will rank foremost for some time to come," assessed the *Mercury*. "It was one of the finest and hard-fought games on the Anfield enclosure."

In 1897, Liverpool had their first Christmas Day win. Again they went to Bolton, but this time visited their new ground at Burnden Park and won 2-0 courtesy of two goals in two minutes from Daniel Cunliffe and Andrew McCowie.

The two scorers were playing as wingers for the first time after the Liverpool board – who picked the team at the time – signed Everton's Scottish centre-forward Abraham Hartley and handed him a Christmas Day debut.

The century ended with a 3-2 Christmas Day defeat at Derby County and on 25 December 1900 the Rams visited Anfield. Another crowd of 15,000 clicked through the turnstiles but witnessed a dull 0-0 draw in a game the Reds were lucky to get a point from.

It proved to be valuable, however, as Liverpool went on to win their first league title that season despite being eighth in February and only top on the first and last days of the season. Perfect timing, lads.

Clearly the fixture planners decided that Christmas Day clashes with Bolton and Derby suited everyone as the Reds faced the Wanderers again in 1902 and 1905, and County in 1903.


Jackie Sheldon

Dick Johnson

Charlie Wilson scored in the first minute, and goalie Peter Platt saved a penalty, in front of 20,000 at Anfield as Liverpool beat Bolton 5-1 in the first of those games with a 2-0 defeat to Derby at the Baseball Ground following in 1903.

A 2-2 Anfield draw, with an attendance of 25,000, against the Trotters in 1905 was also significant as it was the first time Liverpool had finished Christmas Day top of the Division One tree. Manager Tom Watson's men went on to win the title, ironically doing so after a 3-2 defeat at Bolton in April after rivals Preston also lost.

As mad as it seems now, Manchester United v Liverpool was a Christmas Day fixture in 1906. Played at United's former Bank Street home, it was the first time the two rivals had ever met in a First Division game and Liverpool returned to their Christmas quarters in Southport (the squad stayed together over the hectic festive period) with a 0-0 draw, one of five games in which they failed to score over Christmas and into the new year.

Chelsea gave Liverpool a 4-1 Christmas stuffing at Anfield on Christmas Day 1907 and there was a 1-1 draw at Aston Villa in 1908. But wins against Bolton in 1909 (3-0) and 1911 (3-1) gave Liverpudlians something to cheer about, although there was no sign of celebrated goalkeeper Sam Hardy at Anfield in 1909.

The club received a telegram from Hardy an hour before kick-off saying he'd injured his wrist and wouldn't be turning up so half-back James Bradley had to go in goal. He somehow kept a clean sheet and reserve goalie Augustus Beeby then came in for his debut at Woolwich Arsenal two days later and saved a penalty, so Hardy did well to get his place back!

Christmas Day football continued to soar in popularity with all ye faithful coming to Anfield to see a 4-2 win against Manchester City – Jackie Sheldon netting twice – in front of 30,000 in 1913 before the Reds won 1-0 at Bolton again the following year.

The intervention of World War I meant it was 1919 before the Football League resumed, but the Reds did play a wartime match at Burnley's Turf Moor on Christmas Day 1915. Fred Pagnam netted twice in a 3-3 draw.

Sunderland were beaten 3-2 at Anfield on Christmas Day 1919 and one of their goalscorers, Charlie Buchan, holds a unique place in LFC history. Buchan's goal that day was one of 21 he scored against Liverpool, the most netted by any opponent against the Redmen. In case you're wondering, the current 'active' player with the most goals against Liverpool is Olivier Giroud, who had eight going into our Champions League clash with AC Milan at the San Siro.

A 1-1 draw with Chelsea on Christmas Day 1920 featured goals

CHRISTMAS DAY FOOTBALL CONTINUED TO SOAR IN POPULARITY WITH ALL YE FAITHFUL COMING TO ANFIELD TO SEE A 4-2 WIN AGAINST MANCHESTER CITY IN FRONT OF 30,000 IN 1913 BEFORE THE REDS WON 1-0 AT BOLTON AGAIN THE FOLLOWING YEAR

from Dick Johnson and Jack Cock (stop sniggering at the back) before the madness of Christmas 1922.

Three days before champions and league leaders Liverpool were due to visit bottom-of-the-table Oldham Athletic on Christmas Day, the Reds' title-winning manager David Ashworth quit his job to take over at...Oldham Athletic. It sent shockwaves through the game.

Ashworth had previously managed the Latics between 1906 and 1914 and it has long been said that he simply wished to return to Oldham to live with his disabled wife and daughter. Yet this theory is disputed in a recently-published book about Liverpool's 1922 and 1923 title-winning teams, *The Untouchables*.

"We can find no evidence of this," wrote authors Jeff Goulding and Kieran Smith. "Ashworth does not appear to have lived at his marital home throughout his career. It seems that Ashworth, just as he had been as a child, was accustomed to life on the road. He was something of a unique character, some would say eccentric, and his need to move around, sometimes seemingly on a whim, is in keeping with this."

Whatever his rationale, managerless Liverpool beat Ashworth's Oldham 2-0 at Boundary Park – Don McKinlay and Dick Johnson on target – and followed it up 24 hours later with a 2-1 Anfield success against them on that Boxing Day 1922. It remains unclear if the ex-Reds boss attended either game, but former player Matt McQueen took over from him at Anfield and Liverpool were champions again in May.

After a 1-0 home defeat to Newcastle on Christmas Day 1923 the

Don McKinlay





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Reds had an 11am kick-off at Notts County the following year. They ended the hosts' unbeaten record at Meadow Lane with Dick Forshaw missing a penalty before scoring twice in a 2-1 success. Speaking of Magpies, on Christmas Day 1925 the Anfield crowd were treated to a festive feast of goals like no other.

Liverpool 6 Newcastle United 3 – makes those 4-3s in the 1990s look dull! Harry Chambers got a hat-trick for the Reds and Hughie Gallacher got a hat-trick for the Magpies in a match described as "meaty" by the *Liverpool Echo* after Reds forward David McMullen suffered a head wound, bust lip and lost two teeth in one challenge, and the Geordies finished with ten men after Billy Hampson went off injured.

There was also a first goal for Liverpool's long-throw specialist defender David Pratt, who subsequently failed to score again in his 84 games for LFC.

Hopefully that 6-3 victory lived long in Kopites' memories as between 1926 and 1953 the Reds played 15 further matches on Christmas Day and only won one: 3-1 at home to Sheffield Wednesday in 1931 with Gordon Gunson netting twice.

Their shocking form saw them lose three times to Burnley (4-0 in 1926, 3-2 in 1928 and 2-0 in 1952), get beaten by Sheffield United (4-0 in 1929), Arsenal (1-0 in 1935 and 2-1 in 1947), West Brom (3-1 in 1936 and 5-2 in 1953), Stoke City (2-1 in 1946) and Blackpool (3-0 in 1930).

They also drew with Grimsby Town (0-0 in 1930), Portsmouth (2-2 in 1932), Man United (0-0 in 1938) and Blackpool (1-1 in 1951). Despite bringing Kopites about as much Christmas joy as a stocking full of coal, some stories around those games are worth recalling.

A huge crowd of 45,899 attended Anfield on Christmas Day 1935 to see the 1-0 defeat to Arsenal, the biggest crowd yet. It wasn't the result they wanted to see, but the Reds got revenge at Highbury on Boxing Day with a 2-1 win.

The 1936 Christmas Day trip to the Hawthorns to face West Bromwich Albion was also Liverpool's last fixture on the 25th for a decade, primarily due to World War II. Kicking off at 11am (the match, not the war), it was described by *Albion News* as "contested with a keenness that at times overstepped the boundaries of discretion."

Fred Howe scored a ninth-minute opener for LFC, but Albion equalised from a Harry Jones free-kick after Reds keeper Alf Hobson was penalised for taking too many steps while holding the ball. Now there's a rule you don't miss.

The Baggies went on to win 3-1, but at Anfield the two clubs' reserve teams were also playing on Christmas Day and Liverpool ran out 1-0 winners.

Stoke City's old Victoria Ground hosted Liverpool's first post-Second World War Christmas Day game in 1946. The Reds had played a wartime game there in 1941 (after a 1940 Christmas Day Merseyside derby in which Bob Paisley featured, before facing Tranmere in 1942 and 1943, Southport in 1944 and Barnsley in 1945). But now they were up against the 'Wizard of Dribble' Sir Stanley Matthews in a big Division One encounter.

George Kay's men travelled down to the Potteries on Christmas Eve and perhaps enjoyed the festivities a tad too much as goalkeeper Cyril Sidlow took ill on Christmas Day morning.

IT WAS AROUND THIS TIME THAT A RATHER ODD CUSTOM OF THROWING ORANGE PEEL AT PLAYERS ON CHRISTMAS DAY BEGAN

Billy Liddell

With reserve goalie Charlie Ashcroft injured, the *Liverpool Daily Post* reported that an urgent telegram was sent to third-choice Ray Minshull in Southport and he and his wife "were driven from Liverpool to Stoke by a chauffeuse of a city taxi firm, who knew her clutch as well as Minshull knew the goalkeeper's sire clutch." They didn't report the cost of the fare.

A late Albert Stubbins goal wasn't quite enough to prevent Stoke from winning 2-1 on the day, but Minshull received rave reviews for his display and Liverpool went on to beat the Potters to the title by two points.

The champions attracted an Anfield attendance of 53,604 for a 1947 Christmas Day encounter with Arsenal and such was the demand for tickets that the Liverpool board of directors decided to make none available to buy in advance. An admission notice read: "All pay on the turnstiles. Usual prices of admission."

With kick-off at 11am, the queues for the Spion Kop started almost before Santa Claus had made it down every chimney on Walton Breck Road. But those present were left feeling colder than the Boxing Day turkey leftovers as a second-half double from Ronnie Rooke helped the Gunners to win 3-1 in their title-winning campaign.

Liverpool's goalless draw away to Sir Matt Busby's Manchester United on Christmas Day 1948 wasn't particularly notable, but the pitch it was played upon was. The game was held at Manchester City's Maine Road with Old Trafford still being rebuilt following war damage.

The crowd of 50,694 didn't get to see a goal but it was around this time that a rather odd custom of throwing orange peel at players on Christmas Day began. Oranges were heavily rationed after the war and became a popular Christmas gift so football fans took them to the match.

"People saved it up in their stockings and brought it to the ground just to chuck it at opposition players," recalled United's Charlie Mitten. "Actually, not just opposition players."

Billy Liddell missed a penalty when the Reds were held to a 1-1 draw around the peels of Anfield Road against the Tangerines on Christmas Day 1951. Twelve months after that Blackpool game, Bob Paisley pulled a thigh muscle in a 2-0 defeat to Burnley and was given a piggyback off the pitch by Liverpool trainer Albert Shelley, the man he would eventually replace in the same job. Which makes you think of the Anfield statue of him doing the same for Emlyn Hughes.

A year later on Christmas Day 1953, Liverpool headed to The



Albert Stubbins



Hawthorns for a relegation battle with West Brom and were 3-0 down in 15 minutes in front of 30,390 fans. Ray Lambert and Alan A'Court got a couple of goals back, but the Reds eventually lost 5-2.

It proved to be captain and future manager Phil Taylor's 342nd and penultimate appearance in a red shirt and such was the relegation strife engulfing Liverpool that the directors gave boss Don Welsh the gift of two new players.

As remarkable as it may now seem, Liverpool signed striker John Evans and full-back Frank Lock from Charlton Athletic on Christmas Day 1953. The FA must have been having dinner at the boardroom table as both men were cleared to play against West Brom at Anfield on Boxing Day, the two sides drawing 0-0. Unfortunately their impact was limited and Liverpool were relegated at the end of the season, having been bottom for five months.

It remains the last top-flight game that Liverpool have ever played on Christmas Day, but at least they gave Kopites something to cheer about 12 months down the line. The Second Division Reds beat Ipswich Town 6-2 at Anfield on Christmas Day 1954 with Billy Liddell scoring four and creating two more for Louis Bimpson and John Evans, but only 24,073 turned out to see it.

The fall in numbers was partly due to Liverpool's relegation, but Christmas Day attendances across the country were beginning to drop as families began to gather at home more. In 1956 a combination of snow and a petrol shortage hit attendances, but one young Red who was among the Anfield crowd to see a 1-0 win against Leyton Orient was seven-year-old Bobby Wilcox, attending his first game with dad George.

"My dad was pushing me under the turnstile in the Paddock so I got in without paying," he recalled in the LFC matchday programme. "I was over-awed by the size of the crowd and made up to see our goalkeeper, Tommy Younger, because he was a Scottish international."

The attendance was 22,001 – 22,002 if you include Bobby who, even since his passing at the age of 60 in January 2009, remains

THE LAST XMAS DAY SCHEDULE WAS IN 1957

renowned as one of Liverpool's most legendary, generous and funny supporters.

"Someone said to me that if Shankly was the best manager and Dalglish the best player then Bobby Wilcox was the best supporter," said Jamie Carragher.

"I don't think there can be any greater tribute than that."

Liverpool have never again played at Anfield on Christmas Day since that 1-0 win on a half-frozen pitch, courtesy of an Alan A'Court goal. The last full Christmas Day Football League programme was held in 1957 and the Reds spent it in Grimsby. Imagine getting there for the 11am kick-off!

Alan A'Court

Tony Rowley put Phil Taylor's men 1-0 up, but despite shipping three second-half goals to lose 3-1, Kopites went to bed on Christmas Day with Liverpool top of the league – even if it was the Second Division.

Sixty-four years later, Christmas Day football hasn't returned and probably never will, but never say never.

Across the pond, the NFL have been holding Christmas Day fixtures since the mid-1990s with the Cleveland Browns due to face the Green Bay Packers and the Indianapolis Colts visiting the Arizona Cardinals on the big day this year.

In this modern era Jürgen Klopp's players are more likely to be training hard rather than playing on the big day, with perhaps a little break for a Santa hat photo-shoot! But who knows, maybe one day it will be suggested that Christmas Day games should return to the Premier League fixture schedule and Rudolph won't be the only red nose passing by the fields of Anfield Road on 25 December...

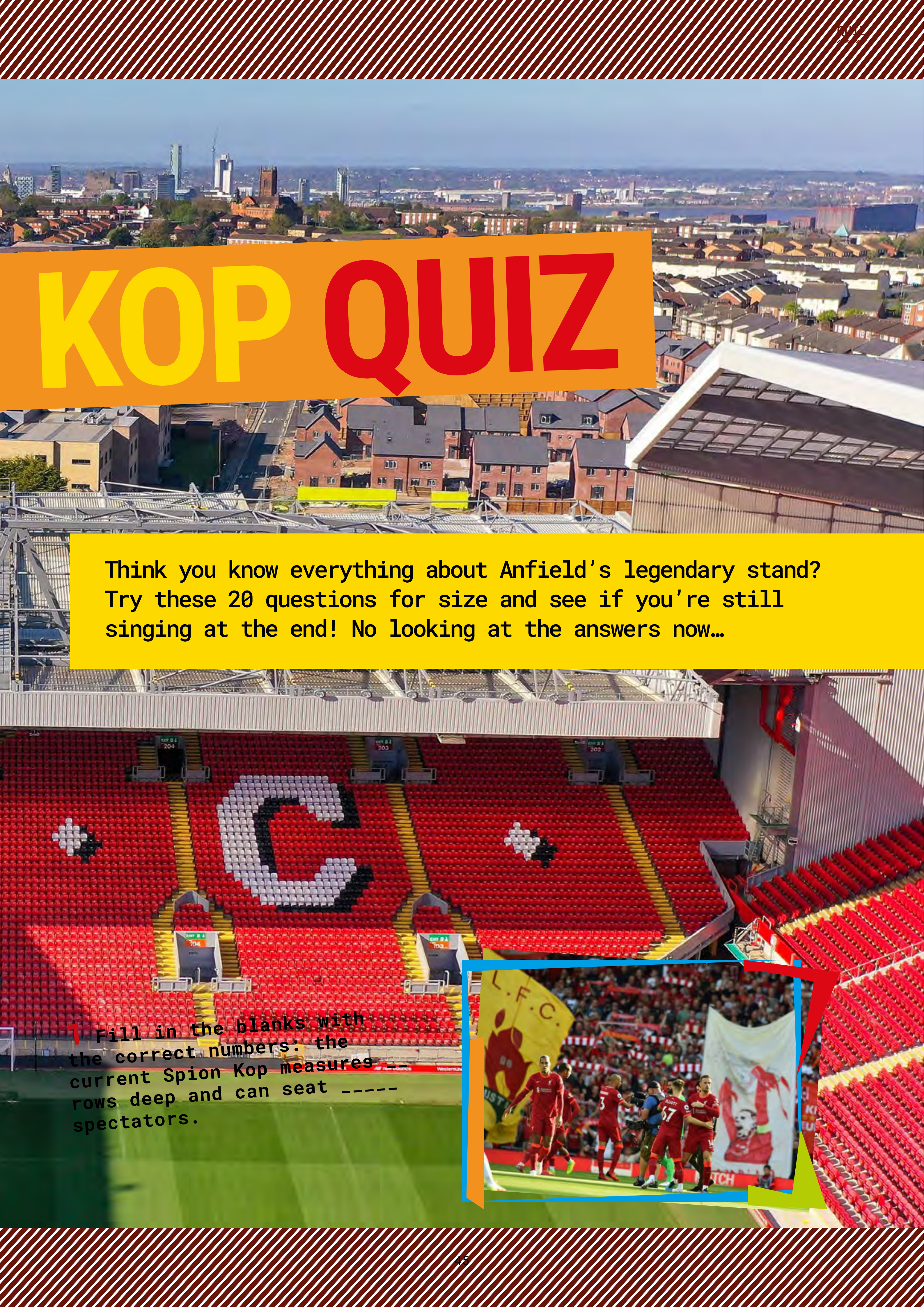



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Give the gift of LFC Official Membership at liverpoolfc.com/Christmas

THIS IS THE FAMOUS...

THE FAMOUS





KOP QUIZ

Think you know everything about Anfield's legendary stand? Try these 20 questions for size and see if you're still singing at the end! No looking at the answers now…

1 Fill in the blanks with the correct numbers: the current Spion Kop measures __ rows deep and can seat _____ spectators.

2 It was originally built upon a vast mound of rubble and cinders during a heatwave in 1906, to mark what recent achievement?



3 What was its original name?

4 It was christened 'Spion Kop' after the site of a Boer War battle in southern Africa in which year: (a) 1890 (b) 1900 (c) 1910?

5 A roof was first added in 1928, by which time the terrace held 28,000 spectators – but in which year of Bill Shankly's managerial reign did another new roof appear?



6 Author David Peace wrote that Kopites went there "to cheer and to chant, to shout and to sing, and to split open the sky, the clear and starlit Anfield sky" in which book?

7 In which year was the statue of Shankly unveiled outside the new, all-seater Kop grandstand?



8 Fill in the blanks from this famous Shanks quote: "If you're a member of the Kop you feel as if you're a member of a big _______ where you've got thousands of _______ all round about you, and they're ______ and _____."

9 During which season did *You'll Never Walk Alone* first top the charts and become adopted by the Spion Kop as their heroes won the league?

10 Kevin Keegan scored twice at the Kop end in the first leg of the 1972/73 UEFA Cup final against Borussia Moenchengladbach – but who provided both assists?

11 "The Kop and the supporters were magnificent that night – their throats must have been red-raw with cheering. But you know what? I believe those fans liked to see us with our backs to the wall because they knew we could win." Who said this after scoring Liverpool's second in a 3-2 win over FC Bruges in the first leg of the 1975/76 UEFA Cup final?



12 Who scored the only goal of the last game in front of the old standing Kop, on Saturday 30 April 1994?

13 Which of these famous European goals was not scored at the Kop end: David Fairclough v St Etienne (1977); Steven Gerrard v Olympiacos (2004); Luis Garcia v Chelsea (2005); Dejan Lovren v Borussia Dortmund (2016); Mo Salah's first v Roma (2018); Divock Origi's second v Barcelona (2019)?



14 A flag of which much-missed Hillsborough campaigner can often be seen on the Kop?

15 Ahead of which home game this season was there a mosaic on the Kop for Andrew Devine, the 97th supporter unlawfully killed in the Hillsborough disaster?



16 Complete the second line from the chorus from *Poor Scouser Tommy*: "Oh, I am a Liverpudlian, I come from the Spion Kop…"

17 And fill in the blanks to this Beatles-inspired classic: "On a Saturday afternoon, We support a team called Liverpool, And we ____ until we ____, In our red and white Spion Kop!"

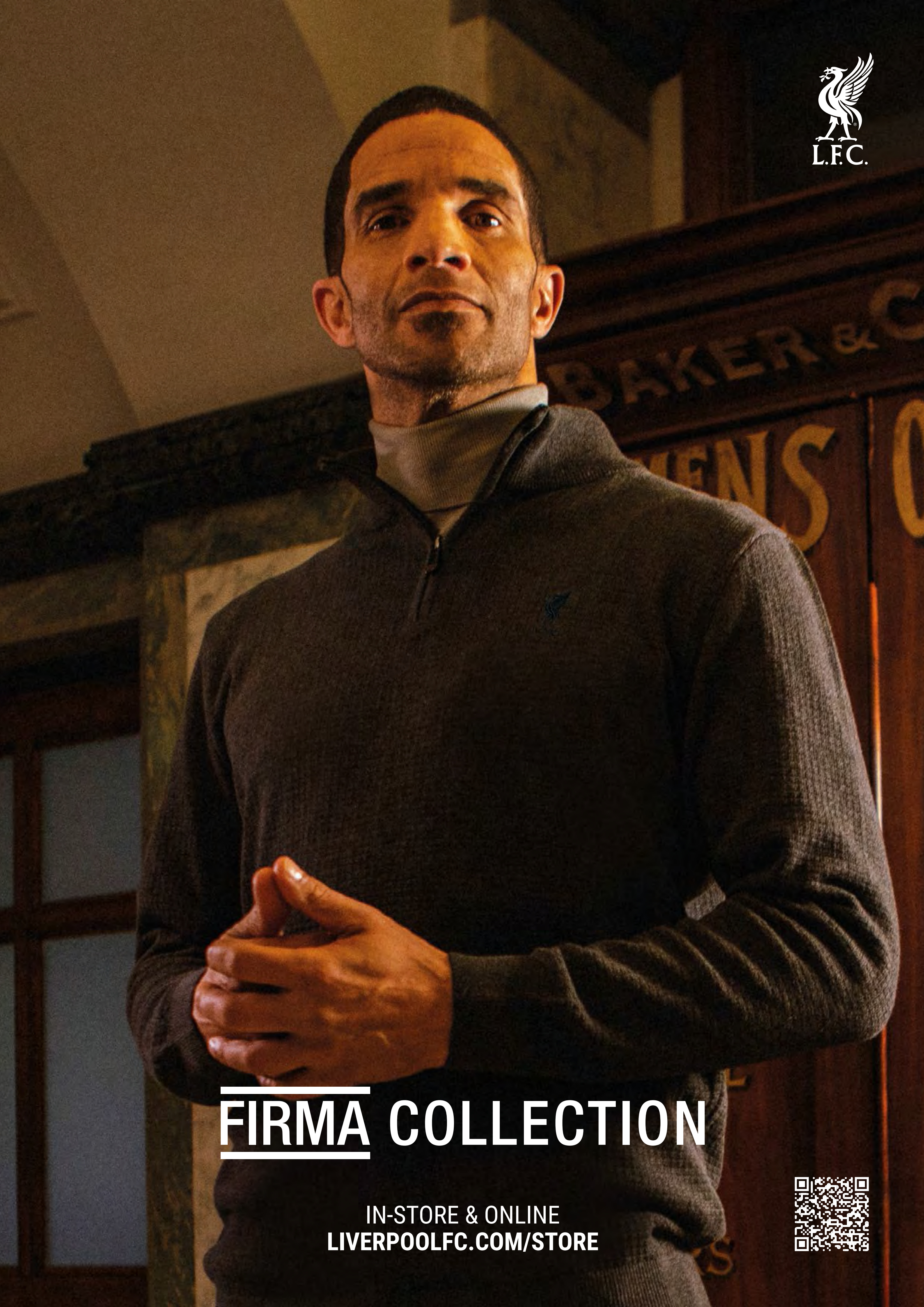


20 How many final-whistle fist-pumps does Jürgen Klopp like to give the Kop when the mood takes him?

18 True or false: before his recent brace at home to Southampton, all of Diogo Jota's Premier League goals for Liverpool at Anfield had been scored at the Kop end?

19 Put a month on each of these magnificent Mo Salah Kop-end goals: Arsenal (27th ___ 2017), Chelsea (14th ___ 2019), Manchester United (19th ___ 2020).

ANSWERS: 1. The current Spion Kop measures 76 rows deep and seats 12,500 spectators; 2. To mark Liverpool's second league title triumph; 3. The Oakfield Road Embankment; 4. (b) 1900; 5. The new roof appeared in 1966; 6. His sprawling Bill Shankly homage, Red or Dead; 7. In 1997; 8. "If you're a member of the Kop you feel as if you're a member of a big society where you've got thousands of friends all round about you, and they're united and loyal"; 9. Season 1963/64; 10. John Toshack; 11. Jimmy Case; 12. Norwich City's Jeremy Goss; 13. Mo Salah's first against Roma was at the Anfield Road end; 14. Anne Williams; 15. Liverpool v Burnley on Saturday 21 August 2021; 16. "I like to sing, I like to shout, I go there quite a lot!"; 17. "On a Saturday afternoon, We support a team called Liverpool, And we sing until we drop, In our red and white Spion Kop!"; 18. False, it's all but one – this season he'd scored at the Kop end against Burnley and Arsenal, last season against Arsenal, Sheffield United and West Ham with one goal against Leicester City at the Anfield Road end; 19. Arsenal (27th August 2017), Chelsea (14th April 2019), Manchester United (19th January 2020); 20. Three!


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Andy answers questions about the marvel that is Mo Salah, the funny sides of Ibou, Milly and Trent, his two favourite cities and his Scotland dreams

PEOPLE LIKE TO DEBATE WHICH IS THE BEST TEAM IN THE WORLD RIGHT NOW AND A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE SUGGESTED IT MAY BE LIVERPOOL...
I think we're certainly up there and that we can compete. When the manager first came in, he said: "I might not have the best team in the world but what I can assure you of is that we will give the best team in the world a good game."

That's always been our attitude. We've always been able to play the big teams and give them really good games and always tried to come out on top.

Look, we have quality all over the park. We have a really good squad and we have a really good team. But right now we aren't


ROBERTSON
26
STRIKE PRO





top of the league. So if people say that we're the best then it's up to us to prove that by winning trophies because you aren't the best if you don't win anything.

We've obviously been successful as a team before and it's important that we try to be successful as a team again.

BEFORE THE SEASON STARTED, SOME PUNDITS SUGGESTED THAT LIVERPOOL'S SQUAD WASN'T DEEP ENOUGH...

People can analyse everyone's squad and say, "You need this, you need that." For us we have a really good competitive squad. We have good youngsters coming through as well that are causing players ahead of them problems and pushing each other in training which is always good.

Our squad is very competitive in all areas and as long as we all stay fit and healthy then we'll be able to compete in all competitions. In the Carabao Cup game at Preston we made eleven changes and still managed to get through and played quite comfortably, so I think that shows the depth.

We saw quite a few of the young players getting a run out as well and saw how good and how talented they are and that will only help their development in becoming a key part of this squad.

WAS THE WIN AT MANCHESTER UNITED YOUR BEST PERFORMANCE OF THE SEASON?

Yes, it would be up there. The important thing was that we were ruthless in front of goal, we took the chances that came to us and we kept a clean-sheet so there were not many complaints from our end.

I think we could have still done things better but it was as close to a perfect performance this season as we've got so far. But the most important thing was three points and now we have to forget about that game and try and pick up as many more wins as possible.

IS MOHAMED SALAH THE BEST PLAYER IN THE WORLD AT THE MOMENT?

It's hard to argue against that. If he's not the world's best then he's definitely in the discussion for it.

The way he's been playing at the start of this season has been incredible. You can just see him walking on the pitch and he feels as if any chance he gets, he's going to score.

But the thing that goes under-rated with Mo is his work-rate and the way he helps out Trent and the way he helps out his







whole defence behind him and everything like that, and that's when he's at his best. That's when he creates the chances and gets the goals – when he's at that level and mentally so strong.

He's an incredible player. I think at this moment he's the world's best and he'll want to continue that. He'll want to do it for a whole season, he won't want to do it for 13 or 14 games which he's done so far. He'll want to do it for a whole season like he's done previously. Hopefully he can because then it gives us the best chance of scoring goals and that in turn gives us the best chance of winning trophies this season.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE HIM IN THREE WORDS?

I don't think you can describe him in three words! To be honest, I think he's that good. He certainly is world class, that's for sure, and his attitude is incredible and just the way he goes about his business.

He's never happy, he always wants more which is such a key thing in football. You never settle for anything less and he always pushes himself to the maximum and that's why year after year he always gets the results for that. He keeps on improving and when people think he can't get any better, he can and he keeps on showing that.

If he keeps going in the form he's been playing in, he'll certainly be there or thereabouts for the personal awards at the end of the season. But we'll certainly not be far off the collective awards if he keeps going the way he is.

HOW HAS JÜRGEN KLOPP WORKED WITH YOU ON YOUR SPECIFIC GAME?

The manager and coaches all help me massively. They help improve every player and they have helped to improve me and they will continue to do so.

I'm always willing to learn and I'm always getting better. I believe there's still more to come and with the help of the coaches and the manager I believe I can get there. He's been a massive help to me and will continue to be a massive help to me.

YOU'VE ALREADY WON A LOT OF TROPHIES WITH LIVERPOOL – WHICH HAS BEEN YOUR MOST MEMORABLE ONE?

I've enjoyed them all but I think when you come to this club and you realise how much they wanted the Premier League title – you could see they were desperate for one – so being able to help provide that for them was incredible.

To be a part of history in bringing the first Premier League title to the club was a great feeling. So I would say that was the one that meant the most to the fans, and if it meant the most of the fans, then I think it means the most to the players.

WHEN YOU LOOK BACK TO WHERE YOU WERE A DECADE AGO, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE STRUGGLING A BIT RIGHT NOW?

Just give 100 per cent in whatever you do. I always take that attitude. Whether it was football or something else, I always just tried to give my best because then if something didn't work out then you couldn't have any regrets.

That's what I always tried to do and luckily it turned out pretty well for me, but I knew for sure that if it didn't turn out the way it has and I hadn't become a footballer I would live with no regrets and know that I gave football absolutely everything and it wasn't for me.

Thankfully mine did turn out the way it has because I applied my whole life to football and I think that's the main thing. Whatever you do in life, if you give it 100 per cent then you know that you've given it your best shot.





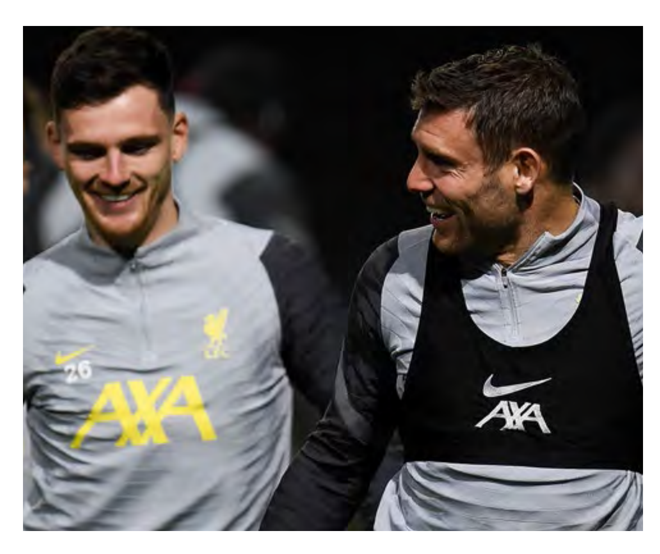
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WHO IS YOUR PARTNER-IN-CRIME IN THE SQUAD?

We're a really close bunch but me and Trent are obviously close. We play in similar positions. We bounce things off each other and we try to help each other but obviously off the pitch as well we have a good relationship.

But I got on well with Henderson, Oxlade-Chamberlain, Milner, all these guys. Like I said, we're a really tight group, but of course you're closer to certain people than others.

The good thing is we've got a lot of good people in our changing room, we get on really well, it's a good place to be, it's a good working environment and that will always continue because of the people we have at this club. So I'm just glad that we're all close and it's an enjoyable place to come and work.



WHO IS THE FUNNIEST GUY AT LIVERPOOL?

Probably James Milner. Me and Milly are always having kind of laughs and jokes so I'd say he's definitely up there.

IBRAHIMA KONATE SAYS YOU ARE HIS FUNNIEST TEAM-MATE AND ALWAYS WINDING HIM UP?

Ha ha! Ibou is a fantastic guy who has settled into the changing room really quickly. I knew how good the lads were when I first came here and now I'm part of that, it's important that you try and make the boys feel comfortable as quickly as possible because that's when you get a performance like he put in against Man United – because he's comfortable with his surroundings.

He's not played too much yet this season and he'll be wanting







to play more – of course he will – but he's had to settle into a new country, a new environment, a new club. Everyone forgets that he's still young because he's a giant!

So it's important everyone still remembers that, but I thought his performance against United was excellent for only his second start. I'm glad he's said that because we always try and make an effort with the new players and he's definitely comfortable in that changing room now. He's starting to find his voice and get more confident and that's what you want because that's how you get the best out of people on the pitch.

SO HE'S GIVING YOU A BIT OF STICK BACK...

He's trying to practise his English but his Scottish isn't quite up to scratch! I'm not sure he quite understands everything I say but every time I see him we're always laughing and joking.

HOW DID IT FEEL TO BE THE NATIONAL TEAM CAPTAIN AND LEAD SCOTLAND THROUGH THE EUROS?

It was one of the proudest moments of my career by far. Being able to lead your country out is always a proud occasion. Then being able to end the wait for Scotland to be in a major tournament was one of the proudest and most emotional couple of weeks of football I've ever had and now we want to taste that more.

We want to get to more tournaments now. We're hungry for more. We're doing pretty well and it's important that we continue that because Scotland obviously means everything to me. It's where I was brought up, it's where all my family is from, it's my country and I'll always want success for them and hopefully I can be a small part of that.

IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE IN YOUR PLAYING ROLE IN THE NATIONAL TEAM COMPARED TO YOUR POSITION AT LIVERPOOL?

We play different systems and Scotland maybe don't have as much possession as Liverpool do, so when we play against the bigger nations we sometimes have to defend a lot more. But I really enjoy the two very different challenges.

I love the Scotland squad. It's full of quality with a lot of good young players and I'll always love going away with the national team. It's a really good bunch of boys and it's the same at Liverpool. But the roles are different, we play different styles and it's just about trying to get results for both teams in whatever way necessary and we certainly try to do that.





WHO WAS YOUR FOOTBALL IDOL GROWING UP?
When I was growing up in Scotland I was a big Celtic fan and Henrik Larsson was probably my footballing idol. He was a Celtic legend, a Celtic great and he was definitely the best player at the club at the time. When I was young just watching him and how good he was... I'd say he was definitely my footballing idol.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES AWAY FROM FOOTBALL?
I like playing golf. That's my other sport to get myself away from football and try to switch off. I also have two young kids so I enjoy spending time with them and creating memories for them as well.

Football's a really intense sport. It's 100 miles per hour and it's important that you have that getaway and you have that relaxation, as such and spending time with my family certainly is that. So any day off we get we always try and make the most of it.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE CITY OF LIVERPOOL?
The people. I think that's quite easy to answer. The Scousers are very similar to the people from Glasgow. They have very similar traits and, you know, I love the Glasgow people and I love the Scousers, so yes I definitely think the people of the city are the best. They are so welcoming, so loving, and I think that definitely makes it easier to stay in a city when the people are so nice.

YOU EXTENDED YOUR CONTRACT WITH THE CLUB THIS SUMMER TOO...
I was delighted to extend my stay and my contract here until my early 30s. For me, it's important to know where I am and to be settled. I didn't want to go anywhere else – that's a fact.

Hopefully I can still do what I'm doing just now when this contract expires and, if I can, then I'd love to extend my stay even further.



CHANGE SOCIETY THEN FOOTBALL WILL FOLLOW

Interview: Stephanie Jones

As his eloquent and thought-provoking new book flies off the shelves, Liverpool legend John Barnes talks to us exclusively about the issues it confronts…and reveals who his favourite current Reds star is





WHY DID YOU FEEL IT WAS TIME TO WRITE THIS BOOK?

I started it nine years ago, but quite naively I was looking for a definitive ending where everything is okay. Then last year we had George Floyd, then something else and something else, and it's clear this is going to be an ongoing problem.

ONGOING BUT WE'RE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, AREN'T WE? RACISM ISN'T AS BAD NOW AS WHEN YOU WERE A PLAYER IN THE 1980s AND 90s...

Back then it was far more overt. We assume things are better now because we don't say certain things, but has it really changed? We're creating the illusion we're doing a lot because of Black Lives Matter, elite black people in positions of power, and racism much more of a feature on TV. But that's a very simplistic solution that does more harm than good. Look what's happening in the inner cities for kids in terms of their education – nothing is changing for the masses.

We can convince ourselves things are getting better, but we've had a black president in the US and nothing changed. Getting people into powerful positions is not the solution – history has shown that doesn't work. We have been taught, wrongly, that there are certain people superior to others.

WITHIN FOOTBALL WE CAN SEE IT CHANGING, THOUGH, AND PLAYERS ARE UNITED IN TAKING THE KNEE ...

That's a very simplistic way of highlighting the problem. What next: walk off the pitch, ban eastern European teams? That will do nothing either. On the terraces someone can keep their mouth shut for 90 minutes, but what happens the rest of the week?

We haven't got rid of racism because a footballer doesn't hear it. You can ban monkey chants, so they'll start booing. Ban booing, they'll clap or stamp – there's always a way around it.

There's nothing you can do to stop people from coming up with something to let you know what they think of you. All we're doing is teaching people how not to get caught.



BUT ISN'T IT RIGHT TO FIND AND SHAME THOSE WHO ARE CAUGHT AND FOUND GUILTY?

It's easy to point the finger at people on Twitter who have no influence whatsoever over systemic racism. More importantly it's counter-productive because we are now using scapegoats who should be our 'allies', often meaning the white working class – people who are equally discriminated against who've been told time and again the reason for their discontent is 'foreigners'.

The book is about looking at racism from an elite and a class point of view, rather than simply talking about it from a black and white point of view.

SO WHAT SHOULD THE PLAYERS DO?

They can talk about the real issues of racism, what's happening in the inner cities for our kids in terms of education, crime, housing and how people see them. They can use their voice to do something tangible. That's what Marcus Rashford did for underprivileged kids.

If we want to change a racist or racially-biased person on social media or on the terraces, we change it in society. Then football will follow, not the other way around.

HOW DO WE DO THAT?

There is a negative perception of blackness because of the way we've been conditioned. We have to deconstruct and dismantle why we think negatively about black people in the first place. The white working classes are thought of negatively from a class perspective – [assumptions that] they haven't got a job, a house, money – but we don't think they're inferior because they're white.

Be it race, class or gender, it's about society in general and what we've been taught for hundreds of years about particular groups – negative stereotypes.

Women and the LBGT community are still discriminated against. Having women prime ministers changed nothing.



SO WE HAVE TO LOOK TO BECOME A MORE EQUAL SOCIETY?

We need to get the balance right between those who have and those who haven't. We need incentives to work. Some will always earn more than others, of course, but we need to be fairer – the average person has to have a decent standard of living.

If we do ever get rid of racism, sexism and homophobia, the vast majority of black people, women and gay people will be exactly where they are now, just like the vast majority of white people. However, they won't be there because they're black, women or gay. What we can do is make it better for everybody, create a platform of equality and opportunity for more people to be given their due worth.

IN THE BOOK YOU DRAW AN UNUSUAL ANALOGY WITH THE WAY TOP FOOTBALL TEAMS PLAY...

Society has the same foundations but improved structures over the years. Now look at Pep Guardiola's Manchester City. They have created a new system supported firstly by the foundation then the structure.

The foundation is rigid. They win games – yes, by scoring more goals and defending better than the opposition – but principally they win because they don't give the ball away. That's the foundation of the team. The structure may change – personnel, shape, formation – but the foundation stays. They choose their players based on this.

Liverpool are the same. Even though they play differently, their foundation remains.

HOW DO WE BEGIN TO CHANGE SOMETHING THAT IS SO INGRAINED?

We have to be honest with ourselves. Ninety-nine per cent of us are guilty of unconscious discrimination. It's a journey of a thousand steps and we have to start with the first.

So when I'm invited to give talks, I put it out there that I'm an unconsciously-biased person. Not from a racial point of view – I'm black so I don't think black people are inferior – but from a gender or sexuality point because it's the way I've been wrongly taught. Because I acknowledge it and own it, I can work to change it.

HOW CAN WE END DISCRIMINATION?

The premise, 'I don't care how you see me – I care how you treat me', is wrong. It should be the other way around. In the short term, superficially I can treat you okay, but I'll find a way around it, like I said before. Reverse it to: 'I don't care how you treat me – I care how you see me'. Then I have to work on seeing you as equal.

Discrimination is everywhere. Walking past a building site in London I heard the foreman tell one of the men he had a very 'northern' attitude. Do you think he meant it as a compliment? It's how he's been conditioned to think of north and south. My brother-in-law is an Evertonian and he tells me exactly how Liverpudlians 'are'. I know it's not true but it's how he's conditioned. Once we understand this, we'll have a better way of living. But it's not going to happen quickly.

DO YOU AGREE FOOTBALL OFFERS A MORE LEVEL PLAYING FIELD?

For working-class kids football is the most racially inclusive sport/industry there is. The black population of the UK totals just three per cent, yet in football it is 30 per cent. Where else would that happen?

Where else can a black person make as much money as a white person and perhaps be fairly average at what they do? Forty years ago, you had to be a better player to be equal.



MANAGEMENT IS DIFFERENT, THOUGH...

Just one per cent of managers are black. Players take the knee in solidarity for racial equality, but they're not talking about the lack of black managers over the past 20-plus years.

Lots of black ex-players want to go into management and I'm not talking about managing at the elite level – I'm talking about

League One, Two, non-league. Would Wayne Rooney have gone to Macclesfield like Paul Ince or Sol Campbell, both former England captains, did? Frank Lampard starts at Derby County and then the Premier League with Chelsea.

How many white managers are 'bad'? They lose their job, they get a next one and a next one. A black manager loses his job, he's not getting another. Secondly, a white manager is given longer to 'fail'. Yes, he'll get the sack but it won't be as quick. Frank Rijkaard won the Champions League for Barcelona 15 years ago, but who's following him?

From a black manager's perspective, we shouldn't say we can be as good as any white manager – we should say we can be as bad as any white manager.

WOULD YOU STILL LIKE TO MANAGE?

I'm 58 now so I haven't got long left, but absolutely I'd like to be given the opportunity, the time, trust and belief, where the fans and the players have faith in me.

We talk about British managers now not being in contention for the top five jobs because of the perception foreign managers are better for the top clubs. It's accepted there's a bias towards them, so why can't we accept black managers being discriminated against thanks to the history and dynamics between races that exists even unconsciously?

I'm no different to lots of white managers who want a job.

IF, AS YOU SAY, WE HAVE TO CHANGE HOW WE SEE PEOPLE, HOW DOES THIS TRANSLATE ON THE FOOTBALL PITCH?

In commentary, we're not allowed to say that a black player is 'lazy'. We used to, and we say it about white players, but we can't say it about black players anymore and this is the problem.

It's the same with 'powerful'. Look at Adama Traore at Wolves. He's not particularly graceful but he is powerful, yet we have to say he's powerful and intelligent. He might well be when he's running over that opposition, to be fair to him. But everything goes back to the perceptions we have of black men.



CAN WE END WITH A WORD ABOUT THIS MODERN LIVERPOOL TEAM UNDER JÜRGEN KLOPP?

He has created a new identity for Liverpool where the team is more important than individual players. Look at a couple of years ago when he played eight reserves against Everton in the FA Cup and we still put on a Liverpool performance – and won!

Jürgen looks at the character of the players coming here, he resists buying superstars and won't have anyone bigger than the club.

My favourite is Bobby Firmino. He reminds me of Peter Beardsley, a real Liverpool player, he plays completely for the team. He does more back-heels than I ever did. In my day Ronnie Moran wouldn't have it! You had to get stuck in and fight. "None of this fancy stuff," he'd say!

WIN THE BOOK!

As a player John Barnes was one of Liverpool FC's finest, and today he's an articulate and captivating social commentator on a broad range of issues. In *The Uncomfortable Truth About Racism* he tackles head-on the issues surrounding prejudice with his trademark intelligence and authority.

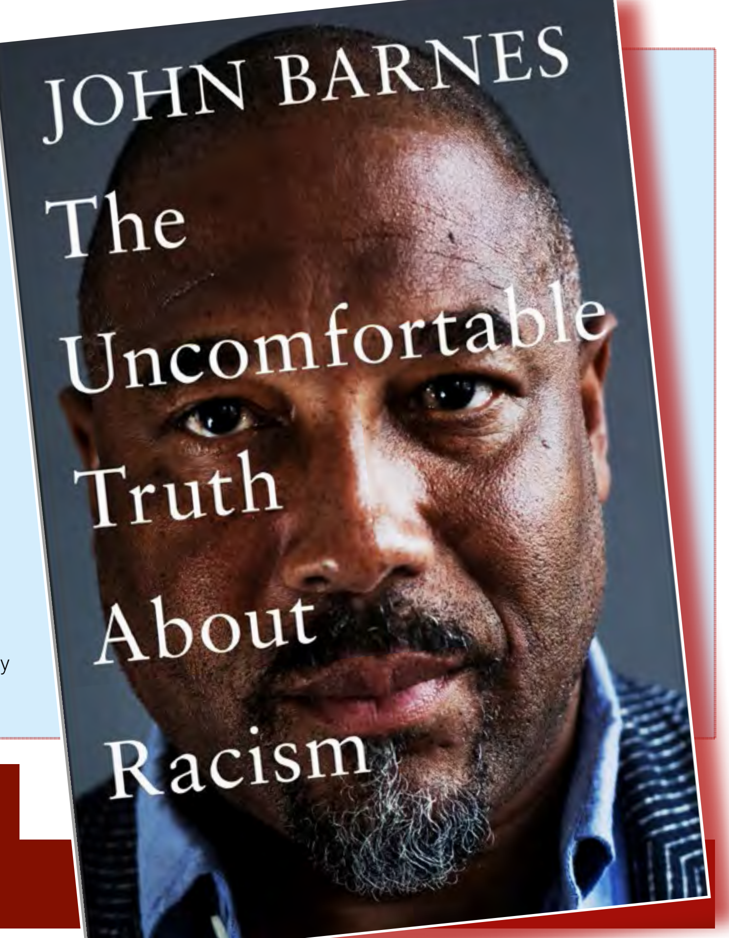
By vividly evoking his personal experiences, and holding a mirror to this country's past, present and future, Barnes provides a powerful and moving testimony.

Published by Headline, *The Uncomfortable Truth About Racism* will help to inform and advance the global conversation around society's ongoing battle with prejudice.

We happen to have three copies to give away. To be in with a chance of winning one, simply answer the following question:

IN WHICH YEAR DID JOHN JOIN LIVERPOOL FROM WATFORD?

Email your answer, name, address and contact phone number with '**JOHN BARNES BOOK COMPETITION**' in the subject line to liverpoolfcmag@reachsport.com.
Closing date is Monday 10 January 2022. Normal competition rules apply and winners will receive prizes ASAP after the closing date.



ISSUE 110 COMPETITION WINNERS WERE:

MONA NEMMER'S A TASTE OF THE LIVERPOOL WAY BOOK:
A Harwood, Darwen; R Halligan, Coventry; D Durham, Keighley.

TERRY MAC

ALL THE BEST

Terry McDermott, scorer of some of the finest goals in Liverpool FC history, turns 70 this December. Over an eight-year career with LFC he won four top-flight titles, five European trophies and was a double player-of-the-year. Arguably the first great modern attacking midfielder, he could run all day and had an eye for the often spectacular finish



Signing for Liverpool from Newcastle United in November 1974, under the watchful eyes of club chairman John Smith, secretary Peter Robinson and manager Bob Paisley



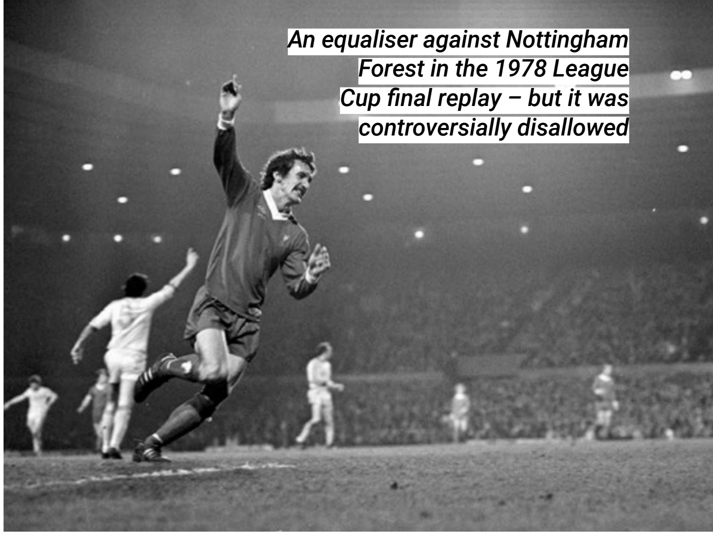
Running away to celebrate his fine opening goal in the 1977 European Cup final against Borussia Moenchengladbach in Rome

With Jimmy Case, Ray Kennedy and Ol' Big Ears

Hat-trick hero against SV Hamburg in the second leg of the UEFA Super Cup final at Anfield in November 1977



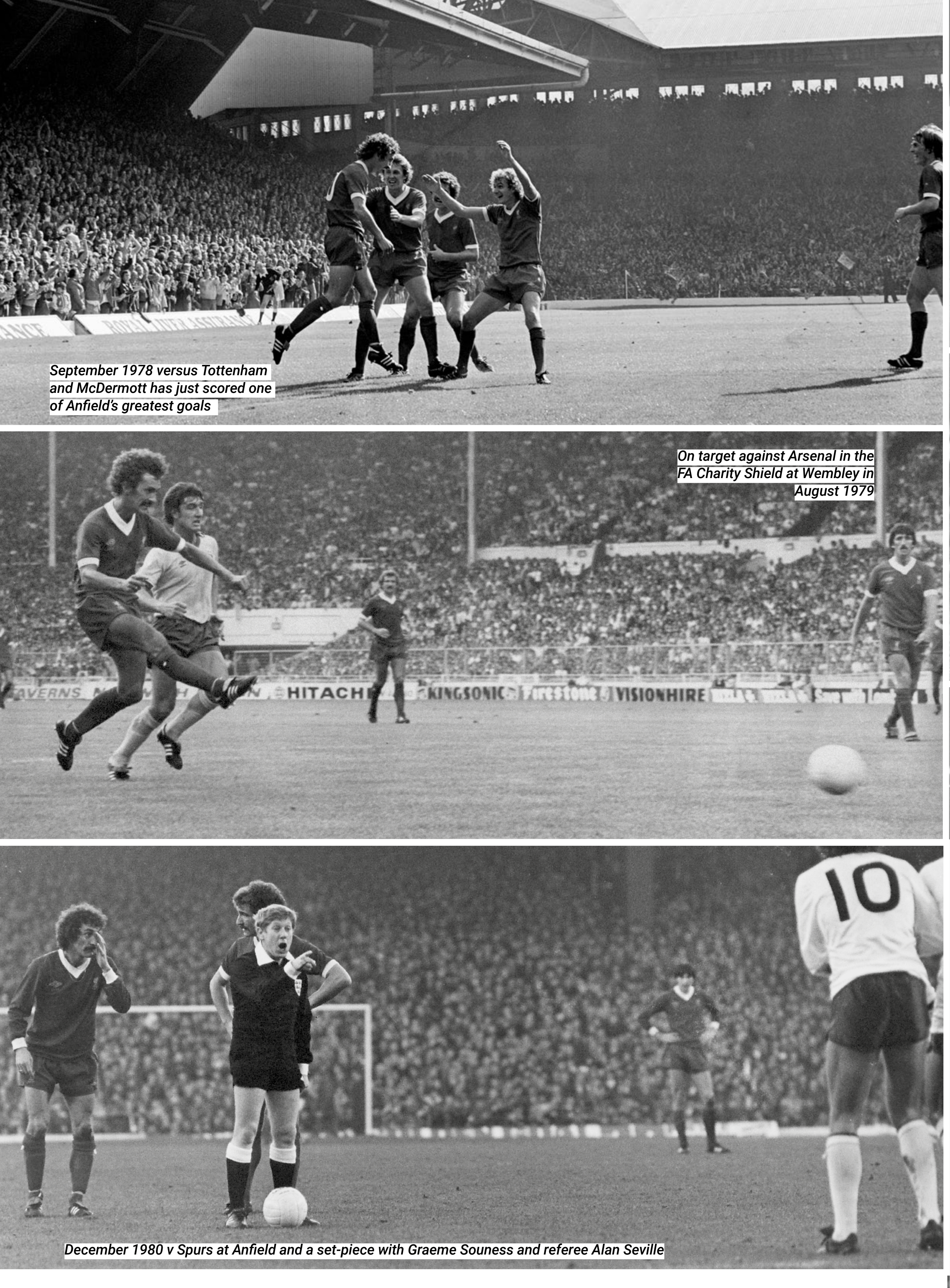
With Emlyn Hughes after the European Cup final triumph of May 1978 against FC Bruges at Wembley



An equaliser against Nottingham Forest in the 1978 League Cup final replay – but it was controversially disallowed



Ready to pull the trigger in a 1-0 win over Arsenal in April 1978



September 1978 versus Tottenham and McDermott has just scored one of Anfield's greatest goals

On target against Arsenal in the FA Charity Shield at Wembley in August 1979

December 1980 v Spurs at Anfield and a set-piece with Graeme Souness and referee Alan Seville

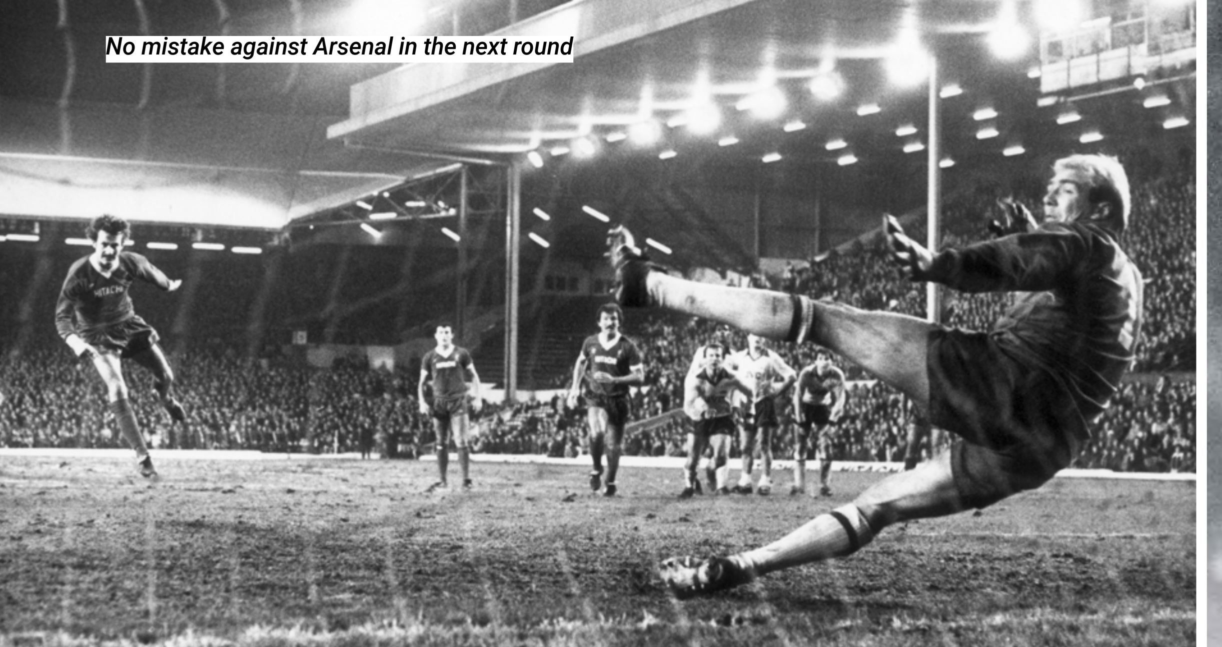
With Souness and (bottom) Bob Paisley during extra-time in the marathon 1980 FA Cup semi-final against Arsenal

In the thick of it away to rivals Nottingham Forest in September 1979

On the Kop with the 1979/80 Footballer of the Year trophy

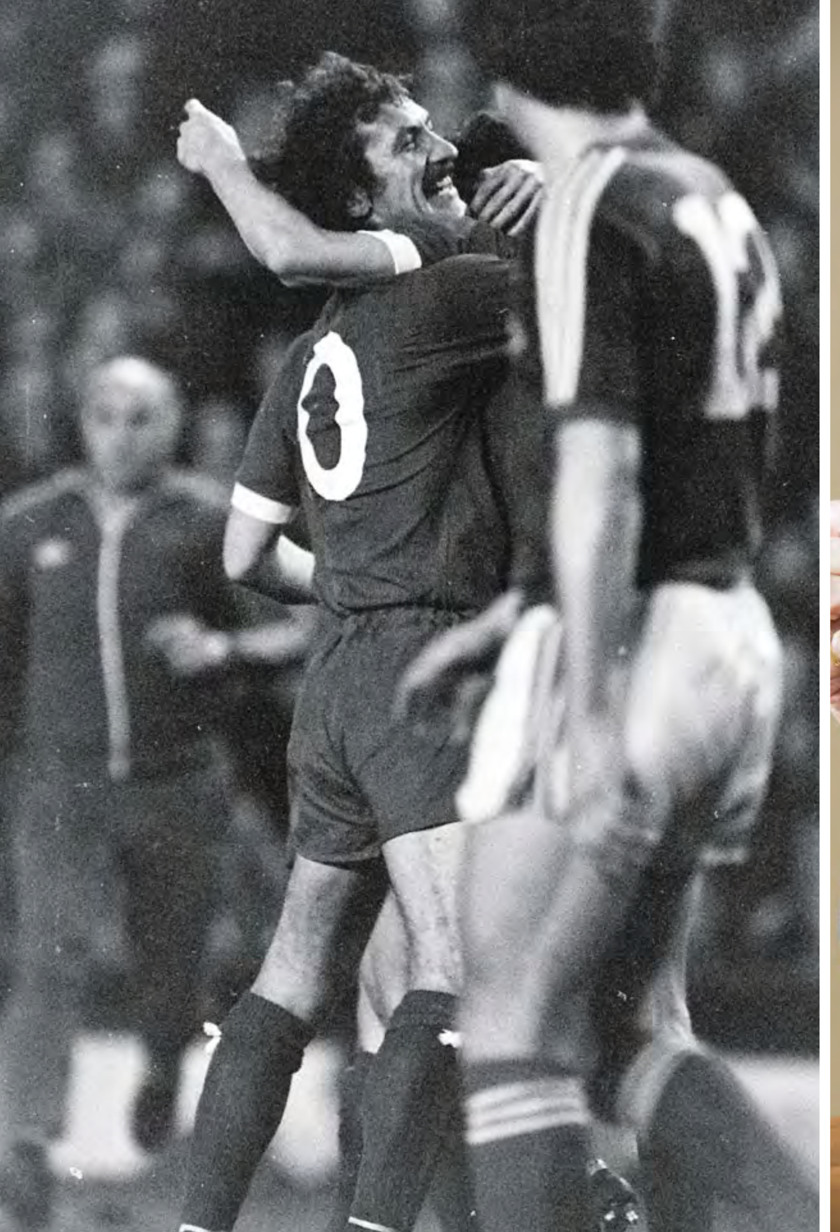
A fourth top-flight title in five seasons, May 1980

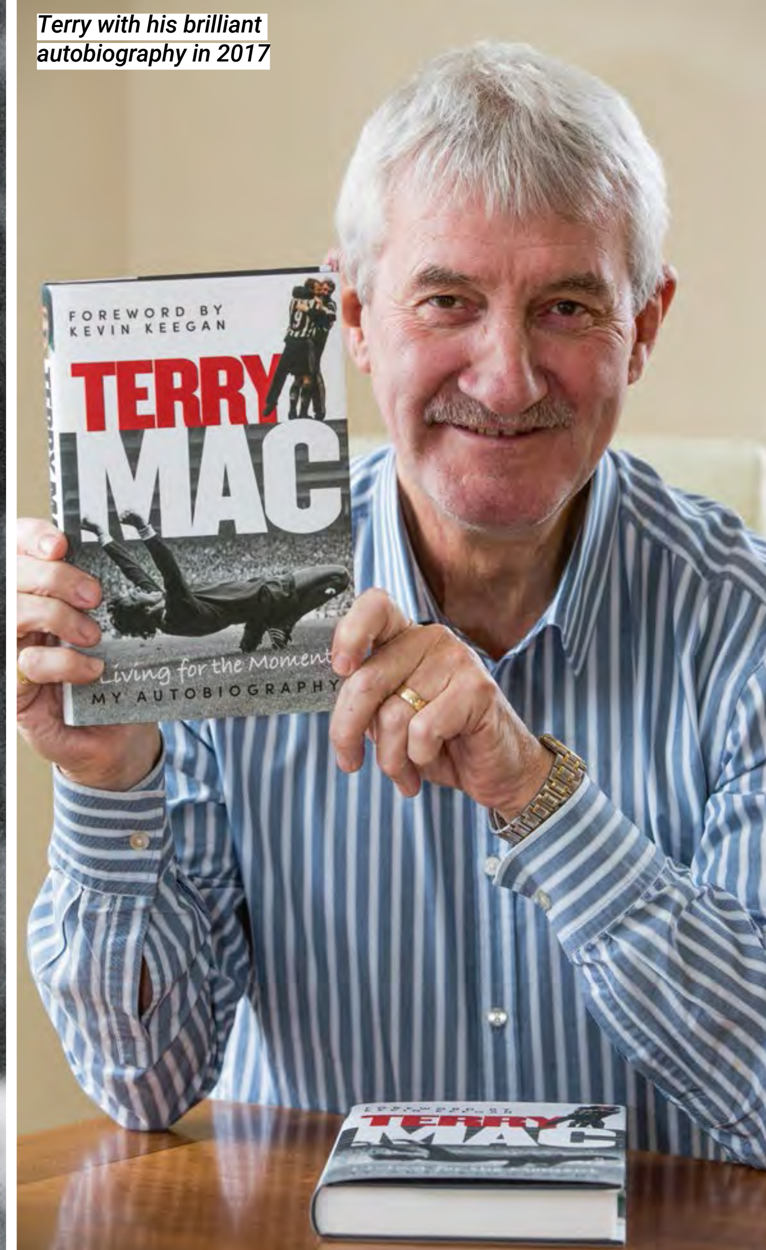

A penalty (missed!) during a League Cup tie with Middlesbrough in November 1981


No mistake against Arsenal in the next round

Scoring against Ipswich Town in February 1982

On the spot in a 4-0 win over Coventry City in February 1982





Terry with his brilliant autobiography in 2017

"I ENJOYED EVERY MINUTE"

Tyler's all smiles as he makes his Premier League and Champions League debuts for the senior side in quick succession

Liverpool FC Academy midfielder Tyler Morton was beaming after following his Premier League debut with a full UEFA Champions League bow for the Reds last month. The 19-year-old from Wirral came off the bench as a late replacement for Thiago Alcantara in the 4-0 victory over Arsenal at Anfield on 20 November.

He then started at the base of a midfield three alongside Thiago and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain as the Reds recorded five consecutive UCL group-stage wins for the first time with a 2-0 win over Porto in L4.

After the game the teenager said: "I loved every minute of it! Especially walking out and looking up and seeing everyone. And clapping the fans at the end, that's what I'm here for and that's where I'm striving to be.

"To get applause at the end off all the fans, that's what I want and that's why I want to play for this club.

"I thought we played really well in the end but we had to get into our groove and I think it took us maybe until the second half when we started playing, but when we started playing you could see the real Liverpool."

The no80 was pleased with his display in an unfamiliar role and is hoping for further opportunities to impress in the weeks and months ahead.

"I thought as it went on I got better. In the end I was happy with my performance.

"I'll just take it as it is. If I'm playing, if I'm not playing, I'll always keep a smile on my face. That's how I am, it's how I have to act, it's me as a person. But the more opportunities the better, and hopefully more come soon."

Thiago was impressed with his young team-mate's maturity in the middle of the Park.

"You know that he has this inner talent that makes him different with his age," said the Spanish international. "He has a long path, everybody knows that it is very difficult to arrive to this level of football, but the path will be easier for him because of his talent and also his intelligence – not just during the game, but watching it.

"He will have an unbelievable future here, I think, in this club."



Words: William Hughes


MORTON
80
SIDE SIDE

>>



TO THE MAX

It's a spectacular snowy scene at Kirkby as Max Woltman opens the scoring against Leicester City at the end of November. The forward's strike put the Reds Under-23s on course for a 3-0 win in the Premier League 2 clash.

Further goals from defender Conor Bradley and striker Jack Bearne ensured Barry Lewtas' side bounced back from consecutive league defeats in fine style.

Woltman, aged 18 and from the Wirral, was also on target for Liverpool's Under-19s as they brushed FC Porto aside 4-0 at Kirkby in their penultimate UEFA Youth League clash.

The win, which also featured goals from midfielders Dominic Corness, Stefan Bajcetic and James Norris, saw the Reds leapfrog over their Portuguese opponents on head-to-head results and go top of their group going into their final fixture away to AC Milan on 7 December.

The eight group winners will automatically progress to the round of 16 in March, while the runners-up will compete in a sixteen-team play-off round in February.


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RACHAEL ON RECORD

Liverpool FC Women have been keeping their defensive work in order thanks to the long arms of the Laws, and here Reds no1 Rachael discusses the team's impressive start to the season… and her punditry role!

Last month Rachael Laws established a new club record for Liverpool FC Women. When she kept a shut-out in the home game against Blackburn Rovers it was the first time an LFCW goalkeeper had kept clean sheets in four consecutive league games since the dawn of the professional era a decade ago.

The effervescent Geordie then made it five in a row with a typically commanding display in the top-of-the-table clash with Durham at Maiden Castle, a 2-0 win that took the Reds to the summit of the FA Women's Championship.

They stretched their advantage a week later with a 3-1 win at Sunderland, a result which ensures they will still be in pole-position at the halfway stage at the turn of the year.

The 31-year-old returned to Liverpool last season having been part of the team that won the FA Women's Super League under manager Matt Beard in 2013. She said at the time that she hoped to help make new memories for the club and their supporters. She's on course to do so and is delighted with the way the team has grown as the season has progressed.

"At the start of the season we were a bit hit-and-miss, we weren't very consistent and we weren't really creating chances," she admits.

"Matt said it would take a few weeks for us all to gel. We had a lot thrown at us in pre-season with people being off at various times with COVID and so on. We also had a lot of new faces coming in and it took us two or three weeks at the start of the season to gel and become a team.

"Now I think we are becoming a team and we're on the





PREVIOUSLY I WANTED TO GO INTO COACHING LIKE A LOT OF PEOPLE DO, TRANSITIONING FROM PLAYING FOOTBALL, WHICH I THINK I STILL DO WANT TO DO – BUT I REALLY ENJOY THE TV WORK TOO AND WE'VE GOT A BRILLIANT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL SHOW ON LFCTV

right path. There are parts of our game where we can still get better but everyone's playing their part, whether they're playing from the start or coming on as substitutes.

"That shows in our performances as we're scoring goals and keeping clean sheets, which is a fundamental."

Rachael is delighted with her new record and says it is a testament to the defensive work put in by the whole team.

"I'll certainly take that! We spoke earlier on in the season and said that if we keep clean sheets then we don't lose games, and again at the start of the season we weren't doing that.

"We were conceding sloppy goals but now we've got a bit of momentum. We were on a 12-game unbeaten run going into December so we are on a good path."

Manager Beard has rotated his squad for Continental Cup [Women's League Cup] fixtures with fellow keepers Rylee Foster and Katie Startup starting games in that competition.

That has afforded Rachael an opportunity to show off her punditry skills on LFCTV and she has received plenty of positive feedback for her performances behind the microphone too.

"It's definitely something I want to do," she says. "Previously I wanted to go into coaching like a lot of people do, transitioning from playing football, which I think I still do want to do but I really enjoy the TV work.

"We've got a *Women's Football Show* on LFCTV [Rachael is a regular host alongside team-mate Rachel Furness] and I love doing it. It's the banter side of it as well but then when I'm on for a match, it's really serious.

"I enjoy it. You're still talking about football and you're still within the game.

"Football is not something I'd like to leave and I'd like to work in it in some capacity for the rest of my life. But having done commentary more recently and working with Pete McDowall from LFCTV at the Aston Villa Conti Cup game, it's something that I do actually want to get into, whether that's punditry or co-comms.

"Matt actually calls me 'Mrs Motson' because apparently I never shut up! But that's a side of my game where if I'm not being called upon too much, it helps keep me switched-on and I think I take that off the pitch as well, whether I'm commentating or doing other bits."

For now, however, Liverpool supporters are happy that Rachael is still very much part of the playing side of things.

A big part of the team's success so far this season has been the switch to a back three, operating with wing-backs pushed higher up the field.

"It's something that we as players spoke about among ourselves last season," says Rachael. "We said, 'We've got very good central defenders and could we go to a three?' Actually last season we were

pretty solid in the four so there was no real need to change.

"But going into this season we've got the personnel to play there and I think it makes my job a lot easier.

"The three central defenders in front of me are solid and they all know their roles inside-out. It's about discipline too and I think the girls have got that in abundance and Matt's drilled that into us. We go through it on the training pitch week-in and week-out, just to reiterate what we need from certain players in that three.

"I say to the girls, 'If you do your job well and properly, I'm pretty redundant behind you' and I'm happy for that to be the case. I try to keep them switched on as much as I can.

"No team's really carved us open this season so we look solid in a three and our wing-backs are up and down the pitch. They [Taylor Hinds on the left and Rhiannon Roberts or Charlotte Wardlaw on the right] are so fit and so athletic and give us such an outlet going forward as well."

The attacking influence of the wing-backs came to the fore in that 2-0 win at Durham with Roberts producing assists for both goals, one of which was scored by Hinds.

"I think they've thrived off it," continues Rachael. "The work they put in, not just defensively but going forward as well, means they cover a lot of ground.

"First and foremost their job is to defend, which they do very well, but they understand that they are important going forward as well. They are our width and get into areas where they can score and also provide and they're fundamental to our way of working."

This season Rachael is working again with Joe Potts, the goalkeeping coach who put her through her paces during that title-winning campaign eight years ago.

"Every goalkeeper coach is different. Jen Herst, who we worked with last season, was great and I learnt so much from her. Then when Jen



GET WELL RYLEE

Liverpool FC Women goalkeeper Rylee Foster was injured in a road-traffic incident during the October international break.

The 23-year-old Canadian was travelling as a passenger during a trip to visit friends abroad. She has been able to return to the UK and further scans have confirmed an initial diagnosis that she suffered some fractures to vertebrae in her neck.

Club doctor Dr Amelia Woodhouse said: "Rylee's injuries required stabilisation in an external fixation device. She will need to stay in this for a minimum of six weeks while being closely monitored by ourselves and spinal specialists.

"A number of other internal injuries have shown improvement on recent scans, while she is wearing a brace for an injury to her knee."

Despite her injuries, Foster has been well enough to attend Prenton Park for the recent home games against Blackburn Rovers.

Fellow goalkeeper Rachael Laws said: "Everyone's behind her and now she needs to focus on her recovery. Football's a sport where you get a lot of injuries and you do have to be mentally strong and Rylee is that."

The third member of the Reds' goalkeeping group, Katie Startup, added: "It was really nice to see her and see her doing well, and she seemed really positive which, all things considered, is incredible.

"It was nice for all the girls to be able to put an arm around her. For Rylee, Liverpool is very much home. She has such strong connections to Liverpool so I know that for her, being at the game, seeing the fans and hearing them chanting her name, meant so much."

Foster herself took to social media with a special message: "I just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone who is supporting me on my road to recovery and rehabilitation.

"To all the fans who have reached out, I really appreciate your kind best wishes and thoughts. I couldn't ask for better team-mates and again prove what a great family we have at the club."



left [to work with the Welsh national team] I heard Pottsy was coming back in.

"I can't really remember much of what he was like the first time around. I just remember that his sessions were very much focused on footwork and handling, which is exactly what you need.

"He was young then and he's still relatively young now for a goalkeeper coach. We have the banter side of it but when we need to work, we work and he's been great for me.

"We sat down at the start of the season and I said, 'Look Pottsy, I'm getting older but hopefully I've still got a few years left in me yet and what I need is the finer detail' and he's been great in taking that on board.

"In every session I'm asking questions. I said to him that I feel like I'm an 18, 19-year-old again coming in and asking questions, but that's how I learn and he knows that and we bounce off each other.

"He takes all the goalkeepers as individuals as well, not just as a collective 'GK' union and I think that's really important because I don't learn the same way as Katie [Startup] or Katie doesn't learn the same way as Rylee [Foster].

"It's important that he understands us as people and he does. He's been great and I can't speak highly enough of him."

Now Rachael and the Reds are determined to maintain the standards they have set themselves as the bid to reach their ultimate goal of promotion back to the Women's Super League.

"We just have to take it a game at a time and prepare well for every one," she says.

"With Matt on the backroom staff, we are very savvy to a lot of things now that we maybe haven't been in the past. We cover every base and we'll be doing that going into every game going forward.

"We know this league is incredibly tough but we're really looking forward to the challenges ahead."



RACHAEL'S RECORD

Most consecutive clean sheets for LFCW

- 5 Rachael Laws (2021)
- 4 Rachael Laws/Libby Stout (2013/2014)
- 3 Siobhan Chamberlain (2016)
- 3 Siobhan Chamberlain/Becky Flaherty (2017/18)
- 3 Rachael Laws (2021)



WHY KATIE WEARS 40

Katie Startup has made a good start to her Liverpool FC Women career. The keeper, on loan from Brighton, kept a clean sheet on her debut in a goalless draw at Sheffield United in the Continental Cup, then helped the Reds secure a bonus point as they triumphed 5-3 on penalties.

Katie then made her home debut against Blackburn Rovers in the same competition as the Reds triumphed 2-1 to go top of their qualification group.

There is a powerful significance behind why the 22-year-old wears the no40 jersey for the Reds. "Goalkeepers usually wear 1 or 13 so I knew there would be questions as to why 40?

"Mental health has been a passionate subject of mine and such a personal topic as well. A couple of years ago I saw a World Health Organistaion stat that every 40 seconds one person would lose their life to suicide and that struck such a chord with me.

"It's such a harrowingly high rate. In the context of a 90-minute football game, that's 135 people worldwide and that is a frightening number.

"The whole purpose of my choosing the no40 is to raise awareness and naturally start a conversation about mental health and hopefully help break down those stigmas regarding speaking about it.

"When I was younger I had someone quite close to me affected by it and at the time I felt as though I didn't have any tools to help. I knew that if someone was to collapse in the playground, I would know how to put them in the recovery position and give CPR, but I didn't know how to help my friend who was mentally struggling and to me that was just crazy.

"In the women's game we have such a high proportion of our fanbase who are younger people and children, so if we can start conversations about mental health in a natural way before there are any stigmas then hopefully that can become the norm and not something people should be afraid of speaking about."



PANTO SEASON STARTS EARLY

Words: Chris McLoughlin

Had Diego Simeone chosen acting over football you suspect he could have taken on James Bond in *No Time To Die* rather than Jürgen Klopp in the Champions League. His side are masters in the footballing dark arts, primed to do anything they can to gain an advantage. Yet sometimes it backfires.

Simeone had already caused controversy in the pre-match press conference before Atletico Madrid's visit to Anfield when he said he wouldn't shake hands with Klopp in the traditional manner because "I don't like the falseness it may include."

Evidently that refusal to interact extended to his players during the game as centre-back Felipe discovered to his cost.

Liverpool went into matchday 4 of Group B with a simple equation on the flipchart: win = qualification.

Should Porto fail to beat AC Milan in the San Siro then a Liverpool victory would also mean the group was won after four matches, something the Redmen had never previously achieved.

They'd already made the so-called 'Group of Death' look more like a one-armed bandit than Billy the Kid and when news filtered through that Porto had drawn 1-1 in Milan in an early kick-off, the group was there for the taking. Liverpool took it.

Jordan Henderson and Mo Salah worked the ball between them and found Trent Alexander-Arnold in acres of space. Before the ball reached him, Alexander-Arnold gestured towards Diogo Jota then whipped in a cross towards the far-post. Guess who was there to meet it?

Atletico fans never got to see Jota in red-white-and-blue as he was loaned to Porto and sold to Wolves before making his debut, but those in the away end had a perfect view as Jota nipped between Felipe and Kieran Trippier to head Trent's cross in.

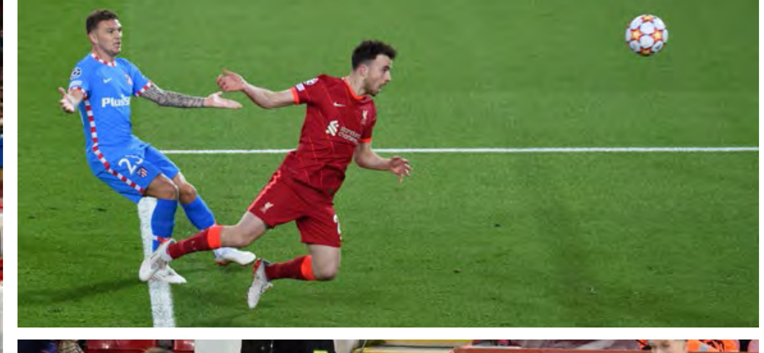
Watching from the Main Stand was Fernando Torres. Earlier that day his Under-19s side had been beaten 2-0 in the UEFA Youth League at the Academy and perhaps he sensed a Jota goal incoming as he spoke about him in an interview with liverpoolfc.com.

"He was really young when he came to Atletico," said El Nino. "We shared a pre-season together and it's nice to see how he is improving and being a really important player, starting for Liverpool and scoring goals.

"You can see when the team is working – and as a team

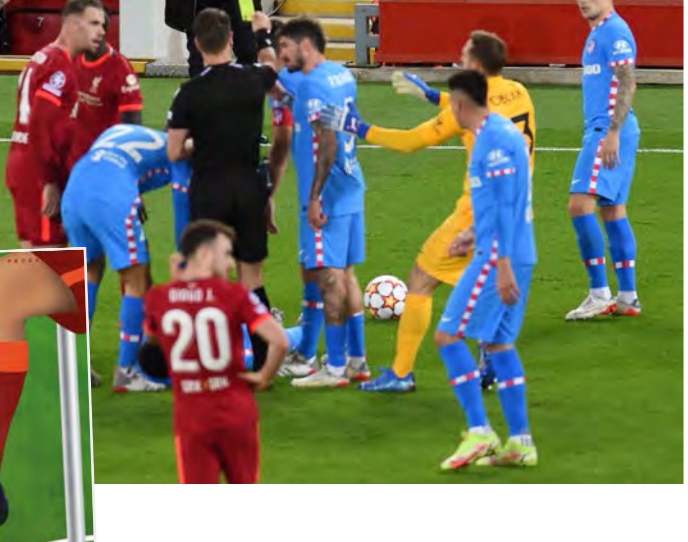












it's working – all the players get better. As a striker I'm really enjoying watching these three or four players attacking, scoring goals and creating chances."

Brazilian defender Felipe was less keen on seeing the Reds in full-flow and ended a 36th-minute counter-attack by raking his studs down Sadio Mane's calves. It was a bad-enough challenge but to make matters worse Felipe then decided he didn't want to face his punishment from Dutch referee Danny Makkelie.

Summoned to be disciplined by three whistles, he ignored him. So Makkelie caught his attention by flashing a red card. All of a sudden the entire Atletico team wanted to talk to the ref with ex-Red and pantomime villain Luis Suarez also going into the book for something he said.

Before that, Mane had already made it 2-0. He saw Trent's fizzing low shot heading in his direction and met the ball on the run to direct it past Jan Oblak with his left foot.

Jota and Suarez had goals chalked-off for offside and while Thiago coming on to mark his return from injury was a bonus, Bobby Firmino coming on then going off with a hamstring injury was a blow. Even so, Liverpool were group winners and celebrated Klopp's 200th win as Reds boss by extending their unbeaten run to a club-record-equalling 25 games.

"We give this win to our fans, who one more night were outstanding," said left-back Kostas Tsimikas, who hasn't been on the pitch yet this season when Liverpool have conceded a goal.

Ahead of Liverpool's weekend trip to West Ham's London Stadium, where the away end feels closer to Upton Park than the pitch, Salah was nominated for Premier League player of the month, goal of the month, PFA Fans player of the month and *Great British Bake-Off* baker of the month. Probably.

Spoiler alert: he went on to win three of them plus LFC goal of the month and Standard Chartered player of the month. Need to buck up on your malt loaf and pavlova for a clean-sweep next month, Mo.

Liverpool needed to buck up on their defending at West Ham because after 25 games unbeaten there was finally an 'L' at the end of a long sequence of mainly 'W's and the odd 'D'.

It wasn't Liverpool's finest display against the Hammers, but the Reds were on the wrong end of two early controversial calls.

West Ham's opener came when Alisson punched the ball into his own net from a corner while under a challenge from Angelo Ogbonna, whose raised arms impeded the Liverpool keeper. "I think it's a clear foul on Alisson, how can it not be?" said a bemused Klopp afternwards. "The arm from Ogbonna is there."








You can argue about whether sticking your arm in a goalie's face should be free-kicks among yourselves, but there was no doubt that referee Craig Pawson and VAR official Stuart Attwell got their next big decision wrong.

Scouse left-back Aaron Creswell clattered Henderson at European Cup tattoo-height. He touched the ball first, but the follow-through was reckless.

It was a blatant red card, yet the ref didn't award a foul and VAR took less time than Usain Bolt ran the 100 metres there to decide no offence was committed. Jamie Carragher on Sky Sports: "That's a tackle from my day. A tackle where you win the ball and you follow through. Cresswell was out of control and endangering the opponent. It's a red card."

Liverpool's equaliser was a thing of beauty. Salah picked himself up after being fouled and rolled a free-kick to Alexander-Arnold, who gloriously curled it around the wall to leave Lukasz Fabianski so rooted to the spot you could've grown ivy up his legs. Unfortunately it proved to be the highlight of the day.

Jarrod Bowen was surprisingly allowed to run through the heart of the Liverpool defence to tee up Pablo Fornals to make it 2-1 and when Alisson misjudged a wicked Bowen corner, Kurt Zouma headed another.

Had Virgil van Dijk not dealt with the powerful Michail Antonio in impressive style it could have been four, but then substitute Divock Origi provided a glimmer of hope with a shot on the turn to make it 3-2.

West Ham got nervous and a chance to equalise fell to Mane, but his diving header from Alexander-Arnold's cross went the wrong side of the far-post and Liverpool's first-ever defeat in the London Stadium was in the record books.

The chance to get over it would have to wait as another international break reared its ugly head. As always, the Liverpool boss said what we're all thinking at his next presser: "I hate international breaks."

While the players were away, Reds sporting director Michael Edwards took the opportunity to announce that this would be his last season at Anfield. And speaking of men on the move, Steven Gerrard went from Glasgow to Villan. After three seasons at Rangers and a Scottish Premier League title, the opportunity to return to the Premier League with Aston Villa was too good to turn down and he'll bring his new side to Anfield on 11 December. He means business, too.

"I don't think me or anyone else will be able to control the noise," he said. "For me that's not important – what's important is the chance to go to Anfield and win. One thing I can guarantee the supporters, the players and the staff here: when I commit to something, I'm all in."

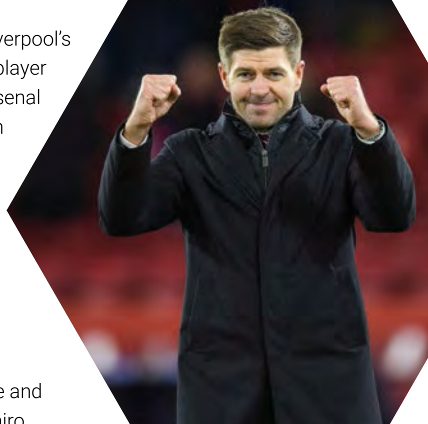
It'll certainly be weird hoping Stevie G loses at Anfield, but Jürgen can't wait: "I texted him, obviously, and we had a few messages back and forth. It's good, I'm really looking forward to it. For these 95 minutes all sentiments have to be put aside, that's how it is."

There was also the sad news that former Reds forward Louis Bimpson had passed away at the age of 92.

He scored 39 times in 102 appearances for the Reds between 1953 and 1959 including four in one half against Burnley. RIP Louis.

This time next year the November international break will still be ongoing due to the 2022 World Cup being held in Qatar. The Premier League confirmed that next season will pause after the games on the weekend of 12/13 November and restart on Boxing Day, just in time for the nice weather.

Who knows, maybe Liverpool will be defending a trophy or two by then. If the form they showed at Anfield to beat Arsenal 4-0, Porto 2-0 and Southampton 4-0 in the space of a week is anything to go by they probably will.



Injuries meant that Liverpool's third-most experienced player on the bench against Arsenal was big Nat Phillips, with Tyler Morton, Conor Bradley, Owen Beck and Kaide Gordon all amongst the subs. They all had a good view of the incident that changed the game.

A 33rd-minute aerial challenge between Mane and Arsenal right-back Takehiro






"It is not possible to represent Liverpool Football Club and go into any game without total commitment," he wrote in the matchday programme. "It's just not allowed. The notion that we would treat a game in the Champions League, a competition we cherish so dearly, as anything other than totally meaningful is also not possible to comprehend."

Alisson captained the Reds for the first time – after being voted to wear the armband by his team-mates – and an Anfield full-house was treated to one of the greatest goals you could ever have the privilege of seeing.

A second-half free-kick was headed out to Thiago, so he hit it first time, 30 yards from goal. Using technique only bestowed upon a blessed few, he cut across the ball as he struck it, putting backspin on a daisy-cutter of a shot that nutmegged Fabio Cardoso and may, or may not, have glanced the hallowed Anfield turf as it glided into the bottom corner at pace.

It was so good that Joel Matip and Ibrahima Konate



Tomiyasu on the Main Stand touchline was innocuous, but Gunners boss and former Everton player Mikel Arteta reacted like he'd opened a pepperoni pizza to find it topped with pineapple. He left his technical area to gesticulate wildly at referee Michael Oliver before turning his ire towards Klopp until his assistant dragged him away.

Arteta's remonstrations lit up an Anfield crowd that was in something of a lull. Both managers were booked – surely the first time that has ever happened at Anfield before any players had been yellow-carded – and with the volume turned up the Reds responded.

Mane rose highest to head Alexander-Arnold's free-kick past Aaron Ramsdale and in the second half Liverpool's midfield three of Fabinho, Thiago and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain were magnificent. In tandem with the front-three they pressed Arsenal like a streak of hungry tigers chasing wildebeest in the Serengeti.

It paid off when left-back Nuno Tavares, under pressure from Oxlade-Chamberlain, played a pass straight to Jota in the Arsenal area. He slalomed past Ben White's sliding tackle and Ramsdale's dive in the style of Robbie Fowler before slotting into an empty net with his left peg.

Ramsdale prevented Diogo-al from getting a couple more, but he couldn't keep Salah out. Alisson's chipped pass was headed forward by Tsimikas to Jota, who sent Mane running clear with a flicked header. Mane could have shot, but unselfishly crossed for Salah to guide the ball in. As team-goals go it was sick, which means boss in Scouse.

Arsenal were done-for and Liverpool had four just 38 seconds after Takumi Minamino came on. Van Dijk to Alisson. Alisson to Tsimikas. Tsimikas to Henderson. Henderson to Mane. Mane to Salah. Salah to Alexander-Arnold. Alexander-Arnold to Minamino at the far post for a tap-in.

As underrated goals go it is right up there and means that Taki finally has his first Anfield goal, ending his club-record of scoring all of his first seven LFC goals away from home. And just like Sadio, he's even got an ABBA song reworked in his honour…

'Minamino, here we go again, why why, Salzburg ever let you go'. How long until 'Knowing me, knowing you, Jotaaa!' gets going?

Tyler Morton came on to make his Premier League debut and four days later the teenager was in the starting XI for Liverpool's Champions League dead-rubber against Porto. Except when Klopp is your manager there is no such thing as a deceased eraser in the Champions League.









immediately put their hands to their heads, perhaps in memory of the other Champions League goal-of-the-season contenders that will now be consigned to being the bridesmaids.

Klopp called it a "thunderball" and ex-Celtic boss Neil Lennon went even further on Sky Sports: "This is caviar. It is absolutely magnificent. He's 'swazzed' it on the half-volley."

Salah's goal – his 10th in his last 10 Champions League games - was pretty good too, even without swazzing it. He took a Henderson pass on, cut inside and fired the ball home at the near post. Compared to some of the strikes in Mo's back-catalogue it was routine and so too was Liverpool's 2-0 win, although had Porto's Sergio Oliveria not missed a first-half sitter it would have been trickier.

The night before Liverpool v Southampton, as Storm Arwen rearranged parts of the country, Maxi Rodriguez announced his retirement from football at the age of 40.

"The moment that I never thought would arrive finally came...the moment of closing my career as a professional," he wrote in an emotional social-media post.

"It is a very difficult decision to make, but at the same time I am very calm with it. I gave myself to the fullest and I have nothing more to give."

Maxi, Maxi Rodriguez scored hat-tricks against Birmingham and at Fulham when King Kenny was in charge and Reds should not forget that he also scored in two wins against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge in the space of nine days a decade ago this month.

Got his song in your head now too, haven't you?

You wonder where the time goes and Southampton boss Ralph Hassenhüttl must have been wondering where his game-plan had gone two minutes into Southampton's visit to Anfield. It took Mane no time at all to unpick his 3-4-3 system to send Andy Robertson bursting into the box to cross for Jota to score.

The Saints did have chances. Alisson made three first-half saves, prompting The Anfield Wrap to give him 10/10 in their ratings, but the game was put to bed with two more goals in six minutes.

Salah crossed for Jota to tap into an empty net, making it a record-equalling 17 consecutive games in which the Reds have scored at least twice.

Then Thiago got his now traditional Anfield goal against Southampton when he ran onto another clearance but this time rolled the ball with his studs from right boot to left before firing it home via a deflection off Lyanco.

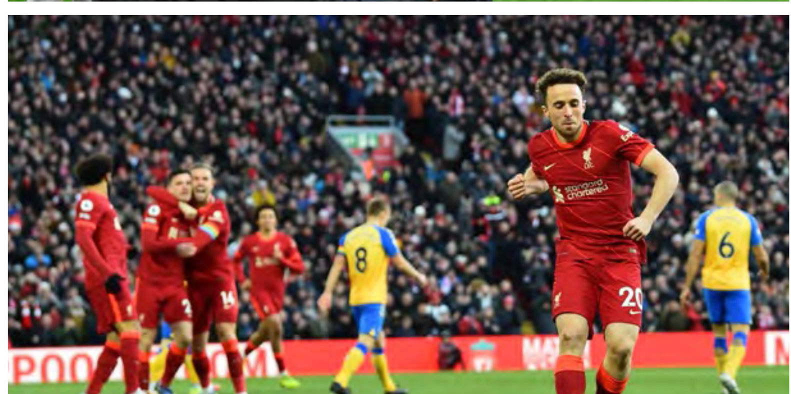
Virgil van Dijk got Liverpool's fourth when he met Alexander-Arnold's corner on the volley to score his first goal for 14 months, silencing those in the away end who had been booing him, and ensuring the Redmen finished their three-game Anfield week with 10 goals, none conceded and three wins.

Two years earlier, Van Dijk had finished as runner-up in the Ballon d'Or, just seven points behind Lionel Messi, but quite what the voters were thinking in 2021 is anybody's guess.

Despite having scored about 500 goals in 2021, Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski only finished second while Mo Salah was a distant seventh, a ridiculous 492 points











behind now seven-time winner Messi who, at the time of writing, has scored 26 goals in 2021.

Mo has got 31, including a couple against Manchester City and Watford that had people saying 'If Messi scored a goal like that he'd win the Ballon d'Or'.

Turns out he didn't need to, but then Salah not getting the golden ball was put into perspective the following day with the news that Ray Kennedy had passed away at the age of 70.

Signed by Bill Shankly from Arsenal back in 1974, he played his entire Liverpool career under subsequent manager Bob Paisley and was converted from a striker to a left-sided midfielder, scoring 72 goals in 393 games and winning eleven major honours.

His most famous goals came in Europe against Bruges in the 1976 UEFA Cup final, St Etienne in the 1977 European Cup quarter-final, Borussia Moenchengladbach in the 1978 semi-final and Bayern Munich in the 1981 semi-final.

He also sealed Liverpool's 1976 league title win with the final goal in a 3-1 win at Wolves.

Remarkably, Kennedy almost certainly had Parkinson's Disease during his Anfield days – he was diagnosed in 1984 – and Paisley famously said he was the player more clubs enquired about signing than any other.

Rest easy, Ray.

WHAT'S ON

DEC / JAN





A FEAST OF FESTIVE FOOTBALL

Liverpool are set to play nine games during December and there are some Premier League Christmas crackers for fans to look forward to!

Before the festive period, the Reds will welcome Steven Gerrard back to Anfield. The Liverpool legend will bring his Aston Villa side to L4 on Saturday 11 December and supporters are sure to afford the former skipper and his assistant, another ex-Reds favourite Gary McAllister, a warm reception.

Other home highlights include games against Eddie Howe's Newcastle United on Thursday 16 December while a Boxing Day treat is in store when Marcelo Bielsa brings his attack-minded Leeds United side to town.

In between, the Reds have a trip to London to take on Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday 19 December and return to the capital to start their 2022 fixture schedule at Chelsea on Sunday 2 January.

Before going to Stamford Bridge, they sign off for this year at Leicester City on the evening of Tuesday 28 December – six days after Brendan Rodgers and the Foxes arrive at Anfield for a Carabao Cup quarter-final. Now that's a packed schedule!

DEC/JAN

WHAT'S ON

CUP DRAWS

The Reds will be involved in at least two cup draws during the month of December.

The Champions League round-of-16 pairings will be made at UEFA headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland, on Monday 13 December. As group winners the Reds will be seeded in the draw and will thus be at home in the second leg. The first legs are scheduled for 15/16/22/23 February, with the second legs on 8/9/15/16 March.

This season's FA Cup third round will be held over the weekend of 7-10 January with the draw set to take place following the conclusion of the second-round dates on the first weekend of December.

The Reds will also be hoping to be involved in the draw for the semi-finals of the Carabao Cup which is due to be held soon after their quarter-final against Leicester City at Anfield on Wednesday 22 December. Semi-final ties will take place on 5 and 12 January.

ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...

ANNIVERSARIES

41 years since Ian Rush made his debut in a 1-1 draw at Ipswich on 13 December 1980
67 years since LFC's record league defeat, 1-9 at Birmingham City, on 11 December 1954
66 years since Jimmy Melia made a scoring LFC debut v Nottingham Forest on 17 December 1955
55 years since Johan Cruyff scored twice at Anfield for Ajax in the second leg of a European Cup second-round tie on 14 December 1966
62 years since Liverpool's first-ever game under Bill Shankly on 19 December 1959
96 years since striker Gordon Hodgson signed for Liverpool on 14 December 1925

And it's 40 years since the Reds first played in the World Club Championship on 13 December 1981...

In December 1981 the Reds took a break from their stuttering league programme to fly to Japan. Their assignment was to compete for the World Club Championship against Brazilian title winners Flamengo.

Liverpool were European champions and Flamengo had won the Copa Libertadores, the South American equivalent. Starring for the Rio club would be their mesmerising midfielder Zico, then widely regarded as the best player in the world.

Early editions of the contest had not been well received. In 1967, Celtic's clashes with Argentinians Racing Club became known as the Battle of Montevideo with five players being sent off.

As a result, several clubs refused to participate in the years that followed although Liverpool manager Bob Paisley stressed that the intransigence of the Football League's fixture planners also played a part. After winning the European Cup in 1977 and 1978, the Reds twice declined invitations to play Boca Juniors.

Seeing the deterioration of the old 'Intercontinental Cup', Japanese motor company Toyota took it under its wing in 1980. New contractual obligations saw an agreement to stage a one-off game in Japan every year.

After beating Real Madrid 1-0 in Paris to claim their third European Cup in 1981, Liverpool knew they would have to travel to Japan to take on Zico and co. In the end they were well beaten, going down 3-0 in front of a 62,000 crowd.

Liverpool would have to wait another 38 years before finally being crowned club champions of the world.





BIRTHDAYS

Terry McDermott 70 on 8 December
Steve Nicol 60 on 11 December
Stig Inge Bjornebye 52 on 11 December
Stephen Warnock 40 on 12 December
Daniel Agger 37 on 12 December
Ceri Holland 24 on 12 December
Michael Owen 42 on 14 December
Martin Skrtel 37 on 15 December
Carla Humphrey 25 on 15 December
Gary McAllister 57 on Christmas Day
Leighanne Robe 28 on Boxing Day
Peter Krawietz 50 on 31 December





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FIXTURES 2021/22

		SCORE	TV	SCORERS
AUGUST				
Sat 14	Norwich City (A, 5.30pm)	3-0	Sky	Jota, Firmino, Salah
Sat 21	**Burnley (H, 12.30pm)**	**2-0**	**BT**	**Jota, Mane**
Sat 28	**Chelsea (H, 5.30pm)**	**1-1**	**Sky**	**Salah (pen)**
SEPTEMBER				
Sun 12	Leeds United (A, 4.30pm)	3-0	Sky	Salah, Fabinho, Mane
Wed 15	**AC Milan (H, UCL Matchday One, 8pm)**	**3-2**	**BT**	**Tomori (og), Salah, Henderson**
Sat 18	**Crystal Palace (H, 3pm)**	**3-0**		**Mane, Salah, Keita**
Tue 21	Norwich City (A, Carabao Cup 3, 7.45pm)	3-0	Sky	Minamino 2, Origi
Sat 25	Brentford (A, 5.30pm)	3-3	Sky	Jota, Salah, Jones
Tue 28	Porto (A, UCL Matchday Two, 8pm)	5-1	BT	Salah 2, Mane, Firmino 2
OCTOBER				
Sun 3	**Manchester City (H, 4.30pm)**	**2-2**	**Sky**	**Mane, Salah**
Sat 16	Watford (A, 12.30pm)	5-0	BT	Firmino 3, Mane, Salah
Tue 19	Atletico Madrid (A, UCL Matchday Three, 8pm)	3-2	BT	Salah 2, Keita
Sun 24	Manchester United (A, 4.30pm)	5-0	Sky	Keita, Jota, Salah 3
Wed 27	Preston North End (A, Carabao Cup 4, 7.45pm)	2-0	Sky	Minamino, Origi
Sat 30	**Brighton & Hove Albion (H, 3pm)**	**2-2**		**Henderson, Mane**
NOVEMBER				
Wed 3	**Atletico Madrid (H, UCL Matchday Four, 8pm)**	**2-0**	**BT**	**Jota, Mane**
Sun 7	West Ham United (A, 4.30pm)	2-3	Sky	Alexander-Arnold, Origi
Sat 20	**Arsenal (H, 5.30pm)**	**4-0**	**Sky**	**Mane, Jota, Salah, Minamino**
Wed 24	**Porto (H, UCL Matchday Five, 8pm)**	**2-0**	**BT**	**Thiago, Salah**
Sat 27	**Southampton (H, 3pm)**	**4-0**		**Jota 2, Thiago, van Dijk**
DECEMBER				
Wed 1	Everton (A, 8.15pm)		AP	
Sat 4	Wolverhampton Wanderers (A, 3pm)			
Tue 7	AC Milan (A, UCL Matchday Six, 8pm)		BT	
Sat 11	**Aston Villa (H, 3pm)**			
Thu 16	**Newcastle United (H, 8pm)**		**BT**	
Sun 19	Tottenham Hotspur (A, 4.30pm)		Sky	
Wed 22	**Leicester City (H, Carabao Cup 5, 7.45pm)**			
Sun 26	**Leeds United (H, 12.30pm)**		**BT**	
Tue 28	Leicester City (A, 8pm)		AP	
JANUARY				
Sun 2	Chelsea (A, 4.30pm)		Sky	
Wed 5	Carabao Cup S-F 1			
Sat 8	Emirates FA Cup 3			
Wed 12	Carabao Cup S-F 2			
Sat 15	**Brentford (H)**			
Sun 23	Crystal Palace (A, 2pm)		Sky	
FEBRUARY				
Sat 5	Emirates FA Cup 4			
Wed 9	**Leicester City (H, 8pm)**			
Sat 12	Burnley (A)			
Tue 15/Wed 16	UCL Ro16 1			
Sat 19	**Norwich City (H)**			
Tue 22/Wed 23	UCL Ro16 1			
Sat 26	Arsenal (A)			
Sun 27	Carabao Cup Final			
MARCH				
Wed 2	Emirates FA Cup 5			
Sat 5	**West Ham United (H)**			
Tue 8/Wed 9	UCL Ro16 2			
Sat 12	Brighton & Hove Albion (A)			
Tue 15/Wed 16	UCL Ro16 2			
Sat 19	**Manchester United (H)**			
Sat 19	Emirates FA Cup 6			
APRIL				
Sat 2	**Watford (H)**			
Tue 5/Wed 6	UCL Q-F 1			
Sat 9	Manchester City (A)			
Tue 12/Wed 13	UCL Q-F 2			
Sat 16	Aston Villa (A)			
Sat 16	Emirates FA Cup S-F			
Sat 23	**Everton (H)**			
Tue 26/Wed 27	UCL S-F 1			
Sat 30	Newcastle United (A)			
MAY				
Tue 3/Wed 4	UCL S-F 2			
Sat 7	**Tottenham Hotspur (H)**			
Sat 14	Emirates FA Cup Final			
Sun 15	Southampton (A)			
Sun 22	**Wolverhampton Wanderers (H)**			
Sat 28	UCL Final			

All fixtures are subject to change.


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NEIL MELLOR

Tyler Morton's progress shows that if you have the right attitude to go with your talent you will get a chance at Liverpool under Jürgen Klopp

Tyler Morton is a player who developed very quickly last season. He started in the Under-18s and rapidly progressed to the U23s, something that is quite unusual for a player so young.

He did well, scored some decent goals and was also an important member of the Liverpool team that reached the FA Youth Cup final. He used the experience and confidence that stepping up a level had given him to help other players around him and the way he handled being with the U23s was impressive.

I watched Tyler in pre-season and he clearly impressed the manager and coaching staff with his attitude in training, but also in how he did during his minutes on the pitch.

Every young player needs a first opportunity and Tyler's came in the Carabao Cup at Norwich. He came on at half-time, played well and caught the eye enough to start in the next round at Preston. He was involved in plenty of good play at Deepdale and did enough to earn his Premier League debut as a substitute against Arsenal, and a Champions League debut when he started against Porto.



It shows that if you have the right attitude to go with your talent you will get a chance at Liverpool under Jürgen Klopp.

Every young player at the Academy must look at the first-team and think: I just want to be training with them and learning from them. Some may think about going on loan, but if I was there now I'd be desperate to learn from this incredible manager and a team that includes some of the best players in the world.

If you get your chance, which Tyler did against Porto, you want it to be with the senior players and not in a side that has had nine or 10 changes like at Preston. It makes a difference.

When I broke into the Liverpool team it was with the senior players around me. It's hard to get that opportunity so I think Tyler will have enjoyed the Porto game the most as he had Mo Salah and Sadio Mane in the same starting XI as him. To play in a big Champions League night at Anfield is a huge confidence boost, but to do so in the same side as world-class players is huge.

December is a crowded month on the fixture list so Tyler will be looking at the Carabao Cup quarter-final against Leicester and hoping to be involved, but what a lot of supporters don't realise is that to continue to get opportunities you must maintain a high level in training every day. If you let your standards slip the manager will leave you out.

As well as Tyler has done, he has to maintain his levels so as well as learning from the senior players his attitude is also key. I think he will play against Leicester, but he may well get more games for the U23s where his goal must be to show that he is the best player on the pitch.

You have to display that attitude daily when you're competing with someone like Thiago Alcantara for game time. What. A. Player.

Thiago is different to anything Liverpool have had in recent years. His first touch for his goal against Southampton took two players out of the equation and then he rolled it under his studs before shooting. I can't remember the last time I saw a player do that. His shot got deflected, but it was still going in.

Four days earlier he scored an absolutely unbelievable strike against Porto. He's had issues with injuries, but Thiago is a very intelligent footballer and Liverpool supporters can see his quality.

On paper, a midfield three of Fabinho, Jordan Henderson – who gets forward when Fabinho is at six breaking things up – and Thiago looks Liverpool's strongest, but due to injuries we've not seen it enough yet to know if that trio can produce enough goals and assists between them.

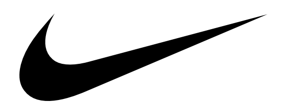
For Tyler Morton, simply having all three players to learn from must be a dream.

• Lastly, 2021 has been a year when we've all had to deal with different challenges due to the ongoing pandemic. I hope that 2022 will be a happy and healthy year for you all and a trophy-winning year for Liverpool in which we talk about silverware rather than injuries! Merry Christmas, and may you enjoy watching this brilliant Liverpool team even more in 2022.

• Follow Neil on Twitter @NeilMellor33










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